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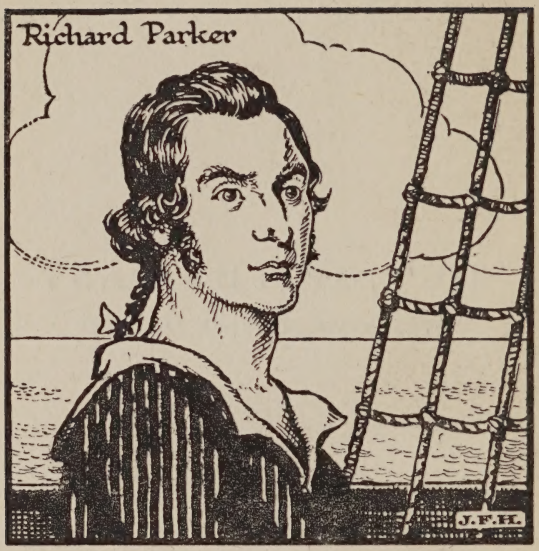
OUT OF THE PAST

SOME REVOLUTIONARY SKETCHES


Richard Parker
J.F.H.

OUT OF THE PAST

SOME REVOLUTIONARY SKETCHES

BY

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WITH FRONTISPIECE BY

J. F. HORRABIN

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PREFACE

THIS book is a collection of studies of minor revolutionary characters. Some of them indeed are almost entirely forgotten. Practically every historian as well as every revolutionary has been content to point to Karl Marx and his two satellites, Engels and Dietzgen, as the sole figures of importance in the evolution of the revolutionary movement. No one, it is true, can deny Marx's pre-eminence as a theorist; but it is worth while remembering that Marx's only important achievement as a practical revolutionary was the foundation of the First International. On both the revolutions of '48 and the Paris Commune his influence was negligible. The actual carrying out of the revolution and the elaboration of revolutionary tactics were in the hands of other men, many of whom had never so much as heard his name.

The neglect of these lesser men is really astonishing. Of Ferré, the Police Chief of the Commune, I have found no connected account at all, however slight. Of Smith, the brains of the Grand National Trades Union, there is one study, dealing almost altogether with his religious activities. Yet this Union was at the time regarded as a very present threat of revolution. It was taken so seriously that Sir Robert Peel on leaving the Home Office took the step of especially warning his successor, Lord Melbourne, against this "the most formidable difficulty and danger with which we have to contend." Yet of this remarkable character, Smith, with his curious acuteness and partial insanity, the sole record is a religious biography and, based upon it, a most inaccurate and inadequate notice in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

The most considerable of the studies contained in this book is the account of L. A. Blanqui. Very attentive students of modern revolutionary literature may have noticed recently a few references—generally ill-informed—to "Blanquism." Historians of the period from 1848 to 1871 will have met with occasional

references, in memoirs and elsewhere, to Blanqui as a much-hated and much-feared plague of society; but, apart from these casual mentions, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the character, history and even the name of Blanqui is unknown this side of the Channel. Yet what justification can there be for this neglect, when Blanqui can claim to have originated the two most deadly weapons of the modern Bolsheviks—"the arming of the proletariat and disarming of the bourgeoisie" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat?"

In all these studies, but more particularly in the slighter sketches, I have allowed myself rather more licence than usual in reporting conversations and describing incidents. Of course only approximate truth can be claimed for these descriptions. But it is at least true that nowhere has any description, spoken word or incident been introduced without authority, though of course sometimes this authority has had to remain uncorroborated and even perhaps a little suspect. Nevertheless, these sketches are the product of a considerable amount of labour in collecting scattered references and bringing them together to form a coherent picture, for which general accuracy at least can be claimed.

Most of these sketches, with the exception of the life of Blanqui, were printed originally in the *Plebs*. I append to this Preface a brief sketch of the history of the Paris Commune, abridged from my account in *The Communist Review*. It was thought that this might be of use, as histories of the Commune are not available, and some of the sketches will not be comprehensible without a slight knowledge of the course of events.

R. W. P.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Blanqui.—The materials for the life of Blanqui are also unsatisfactory. His works are very hard to come by, and only one of any importance is in the British Museum. This is the indispensable *Critique Sociale* (2 vols.). His other published works which should be consulted are *La Patrie en Danger* (reprinted articles from the paper of that name), *L'Eternité par les Astres*, and, presumably, *L'Armée Esclave et Opprimée.* I have not been able to find a copy of the last. Files of his journals are excessively rare. His written unpublished remains are, I believe, in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, but I have not been able to consult them.

Two lives of Blanqui exist. One, by A. Zevaès, I have not used very much for this study, but it is a fairly competent piece of work, though it is far too slight to be regarded as a final biography. The other, *L'Enfermé*, by G. Geffroy, is a magnificent work. It is by far the most moving piece of historical writing that I have ever read. Yet it has grave faults. Blanqui's emotional life is written in it. We follow the "eternal prisoner" through his life: we suffer his losses and know his prisons. But we do not know why he lived this life. We see him suffering, fighting, loving; we do not know his thoughts. It is impossible to discover from this book (except by deduction from his acts) what Blanqui's political and economic ideas were. Furthermore, with the insolence of genius, M. Geffroy has provided his book with neither index, bibliography, table of contents, nor chapter divisions. His book, for practical purposes, is one solid mass of pathless print.

A very brief history of the Blanquist party exists under the title *Les Blanquistes*, by Ch. Da Costa. Material for Blanqui's earlier life may be gathered from De la Hodde's *Histoires des Sociétés Secrètes*, Louis Blanc's *Histoire de Dix Ans*, J. F. Jeanjean's *Armand Barbès*, and from the vast French literature dealing with 1848. I have made some remarks on the relation of his theories

to modern Bolshevism, or Communism, in my *The Bolshevik Theory* (Grant Richards).

Ferré.—There is no life of Ferré. One has to search the general histories of the Commune, and of these only one, *La Commune Vécue*, by G. Da Costa, gives valuable material about him. See, however, the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique Larousse*, s.v. "Ferré."

Parker.—Two histories of the Nore Mutiny are worthy of attention. The first is an old one, by J. M. Neale, but is nevertheless very valuable, and contains important documents and interesting, if pompous, reflections. The second is the large and authoritative study by C. Gill, called *The Naval Mutinies of 1797*. It is a valuable and probably definitive study, the more creditable to Mr Gill because the wickedness of the mutineers obviously caused him much suffering.

Smith.—The only life of Smith is *Shepherd Smith*, by W. A. Smith. The file of the *Crisis* should be consulted, also his articles in the *Pioneer* (signed "Senex").

Blanc.—The literature about Blanc is the literature of '48, and is immense. I recommend a study of: Tchernoff's *Louis Blanc*, Blanc's own *Organisation du Travail*, and E. Thomas's *Histoire des Ateliers Nationaux*. Further, see the bibliography to the '48 (France) section in my *Revolution*.

Pujol.—The beginning and end of all the material about Louis Pujol is a note in the *Bulletin* of the *Société d'Histoire de la Revolution de 1848*, vol. i., p. 133.

I think I am justified in adding that in my own *Revolution from 1789 to 1906* (Grant Richards) I have republished documents (with commentary) which I think of value for all the above.

NOTE ON THE HISTORY OF THE COMMUNE

THE origins of the Commune go back to the last days of the Empire of Napoleon III. If we had been in Paris in the year 1870, we should at first have observed no opposition except that of the Republican deputies and the traditional Republican groups. The large financiers and the few representatives of "modern industry" were at one with the peasants in supporting the Bonapartes. Opposed to them under the one standard of the Republic were the small bourgeoisie and the workers, apparently a united body. Further investigation, however, would have shown us that there were in reality some deep divisions, and the sectarian groups which expressed them arose from the working class. These were two—the Blanquists, a secret armed society led by L. A. Blanqui, which distrusted the official Republicans and prepared for an armed rising to overturn the Empire and substitute a Republic, which, like the Soviets in 1917, would not institute Socialism so much as turn the development of society in that direction. The second, non-political in theory, was the International, whose headquarters were in London, and whose leading spirit was Karl Marx. This society in France was really an immense Trade Union, and its livest branches were, in fact, local trade societies. Yet it had certain political ideals; it was Socialist, and mistrusted the bourgeois Republicans and hoped for a Workers' Republic.

When, after the crash of Sédan, the official Republicans took power, these dissenting bodies became of importance. We must cut short the history of the Franco-Prussian War and the siege of Paris. Suffice it that the new Republicans showed as great incompetence as the old Imperialists, and an even greater suspicion of the revolutionary workers. Two vain attempts at revolt were made by the latter, but in the end the Republicans made a virtual surrender to the Germans on January 27th, 1871.

A new Assembly was elected. While Paris returned revolutionaries or semi-revolutionaries, the Provinces elected monarchists. The new Government was chosen by the monarchists and headed by Thiers. Before long this Government and Paris had come into conflict. Most serious of all was the Parisian workers' refusal to accept the new Bonapartist General appointed to command the democratically organised defence of Paris, the National Guard.

Feeling that the moment was approaching, Thiers prepared for his great stroke. The National Guard of Paris, the sole Republican armed force, possessed a great park of artillery on the heights of Montmartre. The guns belonged to Paris, and had been rescued by the alertness of the Guard from the Prussians when the Government was about to let them be handed over under the armistice.

These guns Thiers proposed to seize. Without them, and with his soldiers in possession of the heights, the National Guard would be militarily only of the value of a police force. But it would be sufficiently infuriated to cause some disturbance, and then, with every card in his hands, Thiers could batter the Republican forces of Paris into pieces.

Therefore, on the night of the 17th and 18th March, General Vinoy, a Bonapartist relic, was put in charge of an expedition against Paris. He himself, with the bulk of the army, was to occupy the western half of Paris. General Lecomte was then to occupy the heights of Montmartre and seize the artillery, guarded night and day by the National Guard. For this purpose he was given the 88th Regiment of the Line and some auxiliaries.

The heights of Montmartre rise sharply from the general level of Paris. The 88th of the Line, under the orders of General Lecomte, toiled painfully up in the early morning of the 18th. They broke in upon the few and unsuspecting National Guards and took both the upper and lower plateau at the point of the bayonet. There was scarcely any resistance, and by six o'clock the whole of the heights were in Lecomte's hands. The famous cannon were captured. Scarcely anyone was about on this cold, fine March morning, and it seemed that the coup would be successful and the guns be carried through the silent streets to Vinoy's headquarters.

But the cannon were very heavy, and horses and gun carriages lacking. The moving of the guns to the foot of the heights went

on very slowly. The sun was rising, and a few people appeared in the streets. Among them were some National Guards who had escaped during the surprise. At half-past seven the silence was suddenly broken by a frantic ringing of church bells. Soon every spire had caught up and was ringing the tocsin. There echoed about the foot of the hill the dull murmur of drums, beaten to call the National Guard together; bugles sounded throughout the district. In squares and streets around the heights National Guards were hastily running up, putting on their accoutrements as they came, and forming into line. Round the troops of Lecomte was gathering a growing crowd of spectators, mostly women and children.

Gradually the crowd approached closer. With it came up the National Guards. Twice Lecomte was able to drive them back, by drawing up his men as though for a charge. But they returned. At last some of the ranks were broken by the crowd. Frightened, the General gave the order to charge, this time in earnest. There was a moment's anxious hesitation. The women of the crowd implored the soldiers: "Would you shoot us—our husbands—our children?" The officers threatened them. Suddenly a sergeant's voice called: "Put up your arms!" That did it. The soldiers put up their arms, the crowd rushed in, the National Guard fraternised with the Line. In a moment, like a black wave, the Revolution had taken Montmartre. It was nine o'clock.

Lecomte was surrounded by an angry crowd of soldiers and civilians. He was saved for the moment and taken to the Chateau Rouge. Meanwhile the rest of the 88th, down below the heights, had gone over. Vinoy, in command of the mass of the troops, lost his nerve, and ordered a complete retirement to the other side of the Seine, to the Champs de Mars, in the far south-west of Paris.

An order had been signed by the Montmartre Vigilance Committee to transfer Lecomte and his officers to the guard-room at 18 Rue des Rosiers, Montmartre. The prisoners were taken thither accompanied by a vast howling crowd, no longer of the working class, but of prostitutes and idlers—the worst and cruellest dregs of Paris. A like crowd, nearly a hundred years before, had shrieked for the blood of the king, delighted in the death of the Girondins, of Hebert, of Danton, and of Robespierre. The same crowd which now yelled for Lecomte's death two months later

called for the blood of the Communards. More and more the officers of the National Guard were hard pressed to save Lecomte. Ill fortune brought them another prisoner, old Clement Thomas, who had aided in the repression of the revolt of June 1848, and was now arrested on suspicion. After some hours of uproar, in the afternoon the crowd, among whom were many soldiers of the 88th, broke in and killed Lecomte and Thomas. As if frightened by its own brutality, the crowd then melted away, leaving the lesser officers unharmed.

The retreat of Vinoy and the collapse of the attack on Montmartre had thrown the Government into panic. By nightfall every member of the Government, except one, had fled from Paris, leaving behind instructions to the officials to disorganise every department and to follow to Versailles. The one member who remained, Jules Ferry, sat tight at the Hôtel de Ville, and was able, with the aid of the Mayors of the *arrondissements* (districts like our London boroughs), to form for a day a centre of counter-revolution.

In default of aid, however, the flying Government sent plenty of advice and proclamations. It nominated a new commander of the National Guard, Saisset, and called upon the Parisians to rally round him. But these and other acts only called attention to its own nullity; the only real non-revolutionary power lay with the group of Mayors, whom Ferry left to themselves next day.

Yet the Government had run from its own shadow. There was really no central direction on the other side to be afraid of. The defeat of Vinoy, the death of Lecomte, and the rout of the Government had not been the work of the Central Committee of the National Guard. The rank and file of the National Guard had assembled spontaneously. The Committee only gave the most general orders to their own Commandant-in-chief, Lullier, and did not see to their execution. Thus he failed to close the gates, disperse the few counter-revolutionary groupings, or seize Fort Mont Valerien, which commanded the western side of Paris, and was reoccupied by Government troops. Not until the 20th or 21st did the Committee realise that it was sole governor of Paris. It was still so oppressed by its own incompetence and lack of constitutional authority that it permitted itself to be deluded by the Mayors, who were gaining time for the Government. It

entered into negotiations with them to arrange for the election of a Paris municipal body; it attached such importance to their assent that they were able to delay this election till 26th March.

Till that date the Committee did nothing. Meanwhile Thiers was carefully collecting an army. He concentrated his untrustworthy troops into a large camp at Satory, from which civilians were banished. It was hardly possible for an ordinary man to approach it. Inside, the soldiers were well fed and treated and subjected to careful propaganda. Moreover, he went to Bismarck, who was still occupying northern France to the very walls of Paris, and secured from him relays of prisoners from Napoleon's army to supplement the attack on Paris.

On March 26th the Paris municipality was elected. It had a crushing revolutionary majority, and took the name of the Commune.

What did the Commune mean? What was the challenge this name involved?

It was not, as the proclamation of a Soviet would be to-day, an absolutely clear-cut and certain defiance. It implied no such clear, detailed and elaborate revolt as the word "Soviet" does. It was still vague. "Commune" was, and still is, a respectable French bourgeois word. It means an Urban or Rural District Council, and as such is part of the French State machinery. Legally, therefore, the proclamation of the "Commune" might have meant only the assumption by Paris of the ordinary municipal autonomy, which had previously been denied her. Anarchists have been found who claimed that this demand, together with the broader scheme of decentralisation outlined later, was the real essence of the Commune. Such an argument is entirely misleading. A dispute about details of local government is not a possible basis for a revolution.

First and foremost, to both the workers and smaller middle class, who rallied to it, the Commune meant the great Commune of 1792 and 1793—the strong revolutionary organ of all the poorer classes of Paris, which had torn down the King and erected the Republic, which had purged the Convention of Girondins, and throughout the critical years had led and made the Revolution. Again and again it had overturned and broken down the power of reaction and the moneyed classes. It was this body which

Paris was calling back to life—a power which should turn upon the enthroned reaction, the money power represented by the Thiers Government, and snap it like a brittle stick, as the old Commune on the 10th of August 1792 had broken for ever the French Monarchy.

This idea had taken hold of all classes. But a new idea was in the minds of the majority of the Communards, and that idea, the future showed, was the essence of the Commune, and all that was vital and dangerous in it. The rest was Republican and decentralist sentimentalism, mere historical dreaming. The new idea was that the Commune was the Workers' Republic. All the working class of Paris, and the small shopkeepers and working employers who were still in the proletarian environment, felt that the workers had taken their fate into their own hands. At the very beginning, on March 20th, the *Journal Officiel* wrote:

"The proletarians of the capital, in the midst of the failure and treason of the governing classes, have realised that the hour has arrived for them to save the situation by taking over the direction of public affairs. . . . The proletariat, in the face of the permanent threat to its rights, of the absolute refusal of its legitimate aspirations, and of the ruin of the country and all its hopes, understood that it was its imperative duty and absolute right to take its destiny into its own hands and ensure victory by seizing power."

This was the Commune—the seizure of power by the workers. This is what made it great and dangerous to the governing class. It is for this that it lives and is remembered in history.

On March 26th, when the Commune was proclaimed, a great wave of happiness and relief swept over Paris. Rarely have such scenes been witnessed as were seen in the square of the Hôtel de Ville that day. The delirious enthusiasm spread even to the bourgeoisie. Worker and employer rejoiced together. Old men who had seen '48 were weeping silently. Young men, women and children—all were radiant. The flowers scattered, the red flags dipping and waving, the singing crowds, the maddening pulse of the *Marseillaise*—there was something in all this that gave the feeling of a great freedom, a new life. Spies reported to Versailles that Paris was "mad with the Commune." It was

true. Paris felt that an old oppressing tyranny had been broken ; she felt that rare joy of a revolutionary moment, when the old and evil weight is cast aside, and for a moment all is possible, when there is a vision or a feeling of the future which compensates for past and coming sufferings and intoxicates like wine.

But rejoicing could not last for ever. Thiers was preparing his army, and on April 2nd it was ready. He turned his guns on Paris that day. That day, too, occurred the first battle between the Federals, as the National Guards were called, and the Versaillese, as the troops of Thiers were named. Next day the Commune replied by a grand sortie, which met with disaster and defeat, due, not to the rank and file, but to the utter incompetence of the generals. From that day, April 3rd, Paris and Versailles settled down to a grinding and bloody trench warfare. Along all the western walls of Paris the battle was fought relentlessly day by day, and day by day the Communards were more outnumbered.

The fiasco of April 3rd was followed by the appointment of Cluseret to command the whole Guard. He was supposed to have distinguished himself in the American Civil War. Be that as it may, Cluseret destroyed the Commune. He simply failed to attend to his duties—to relieve regiments in the field, to provide munitions and supervise contractors, to organise the defence. He did nothing, and what little he could have done was defeated by the interference of the re-elected Central Committee of the National Guard, which claimed to issue orders without consulting him.

Twenty-seven days of this folly nearly destroyed the Communard Army. On April 30th Cluseret was arrested, and a young officer named Rossel took his place. Now some beginnings of organisation were made. The front was divided up under three competent generals: munitions were organised. But on May 9th the fort of Issy fell. Rossel made an attempt at a *coup d'état* against the Commune, failed and fled. Delescluze, a veteran enemy of Blanqui, but a Blanquist in ideas, took over in a vain attempt to reduce the War Department to order.

From the 26th of March two months elapsed before the Commune fell. So it had had time to outline a general policy and to begin, clumsily and hesitatingly, the creation of a "workers' state."

Inside the Commune there was a majority and a minority.

Very roughly, these were composed of the Blanquists, plus the romantic Republicans, and the International respectively. The members of the International, together with the rest of the minority, were not opposed to the majority on any question of Socialist principle. They were opposed entirely to the policy, or lack of policy, of the majority. Of this majority, the Blanquists were deprived of guidance and policy by the capture of their leader, Blanqui, by Thiers' Government. Blanqui's policy had always been, briefly, concentration on the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship, and upon the successful prosecution of the war on the bourgeoisie. For this reason he had deliberately eschewed all discussion of general Socialist policy, and selected his followers for their audacity and obedience rather than their theoretical principles. So he had built up a close body of militant revolutionaries; but now, when he himself was in prison, captured by Thiers in the Provinces, his followers were without any leader. The grave faults of his organisation at once came out. No one could take the place of Blanqui, and, incapable of any regular policy, the Blanquists drifted. They carried out small coups and showed isolated instances of vigour, but were unable to follow any general policy. They were lieutenants without a general. Their greatest anxiety was to recover Blanqui. They offered to Thiers to exchange for Blanqui all the hostages in the hands of the Commune, but Thiers, prudently enough, refused.

The vacillations of the Blanquists were made worse by the mass of the Commune members, who were accustomed to look to the old leaders of '48 for guidance. The Commune was essentially a chance and haphazard assembly of working-class representatives. If we were to-day to take a haphazard assembly of workers' delegates, hastily elected without the chance of sifting or of organisation, we should undoubtedly find them a "mixed lot." There would be probably one or two actual scoundrels, a sprinkling of foreigners, a number of steady and honest workers of but second-rate abilities, a disproportionate number of mere talkers, and a few who by their ability and courage were able to impress themselves on the assembly. Such exactly was the Commune. There were in it one or two whose characters were not above suspicion. An ex-forger, Blanchet, was expelled, and of two others it is suspected that they had been police spies. There were a few foreigners. The mass of the Commune members

were working men of solid worth, but they were completely under the influence of the mere talkers, of whom Felix Pyat may stand as the type. The stock-in-trade, rather than the policy, of these men was only the memory of 1793, and their only resource an imitation of those days.

The members of the International, who mostly belonged to the minority, were in some ways more "realist" than the rest, though they were called dreamers. The International, in 1870 a strong trade union federation, found that the unions had disappeared during the siege. It was, consequently, reduced to reliance upon its political "sections," which in Paris had not become strong or typical of the International till 1871. The programme of the International was the handing over of capitalist industry to autonomous workers' associations, arising out of the trade unions (it has been rediscovered in England under the title of Guild Socialism), while the political state was to be a decentralised Republic. The International was, indeed, too preoccupied with its ideal State to realise the supremacy of the demands of the Department of War.

In among the members of the Commune were scattered one or two who were fully competent for their duties, such as Delescluze or Varlin. But these few heroic men could not possibly raise the members of the Commune up to their own level. The incompetence and vacillation of the Commune stands out in startling relief from the heroism and self-sacrifice of the rank and file of the National Guard.

It is not surprising to find, therefore, that there is little to record concerning the Commune's general policy. Two manifestoes which were issued to the Provinces contained little but emotional appeals. The "programme" passed by the Commune confined itself strictly to the decentralist theories mentioned above.

The Commune, naturally, repealed the destructive decree of the Assembly on rents and bills. It excused the workers all rent, and provided for their existence by continuing the pay and allowances of the National Guard. It returned all the furniture and property of the poorer classes which were in the pawnshops. It separated Church and State, confiscated ecclesiastical property and secularised education. It pulled down the Vendôme Column, the most famous Paris monument to the victories of

Napoleon I. It fixed a maximum salary of £240 a year for Communard officials. It suppressed a certain number of anti-Communard journals.

But that was all. Rightly or wrongly, the Commune was too oppressed by the military needs of the moment to occupy itself with outlining the basis of a new society.

To stop the murder of prisoners by the Versaillese, the Commune passed a decree that for every prisoner murdered, three hostages should be shot from anti-Communards remaining in Paris. Rigault, in consequence, collected a number of hostages, mostly minor agents of reaction, but including the Archbishop of Paris, the President of the High Court, and—best prize of all—Jecker, the capitalist who had inspired Napoleon's Mexican war. Nevertheless the decree was not carried out; for although the Versaillese resumed, after a pause, their practice of shooting prisoners, no prisoner or unarmed man was killed by the Communards throughout the siege from April 2nd to May 23rd.

The flight of Rossel had been followed by the appointment of a Committee of Public Safety. A fine name, but mere names would not make Pyat and his kind change their characters. It was recalled for its own incompetence, and the defence left to Delescluze. But his efforts were obviously hopeless: his men were outnumbered by 10 to 1. After Issy, Fort Vanves had fallen, and the end was only a matter of time.

The Commune, romantic as ever, attempted to meet the situation by appointing another Committee of Public Safety (May 15th). The minority, disgusted at what they considered to be playing with a serious situation, quitted the Commune and withdrew to the *arrondissements* (boroughs), for the members of the Commune were *ex officio* the borough council for their district. The Federal Council of the International persuaded them that to withdraw at this moment would be scandalous, and they returned.

On May 22nd a spy gave signals to the Versailles army that the extreme south-west end of Paris (Auteuil) was undefended, and the Government troops crept in during the afternoon. That evening and next morning they poured in by all the western gates.

The 23rd of May found the Commune taken by surprise. Delescluze, Dombrowski, Rigault, and a few others attempted to organise the defence. Some members of the Commune, particularly

those who had most bravely flaunted their red sashes a few days before, crept into ignominious hiding. The various battalions of the National Guard, following the natural instincts of popular forces, withdrew to defend their own quarters. Dombrowski, and later Rigault, were killed fighting. La Cecilia, Wroblewski, Varlin, Frankel and others attempted to organise the resistance in their own quarters, but, owing to the defections in the Commune itself—nearly the first to run was, of course, Felix Pyat—there was no concerted resistance.

The Versaillese were able to capture nearly all the barricades on the 23rd and 24th by outflanking them, so disorganised was the resistance. The casualties in battle were very small. If they had pushed on, as General Clinchant demanded, Paris would have fallen at once. But that was not their plan, nor the orders of M. Thiers.

Immediately upon their entry into Paris the Versaillese troops organised a massacre. The soldiers had orders, which were executed, to kill at once all who surrendered with arms in their hands. They murdered, moreover, anyone whom casual suspicions or interested denunciations indicated. Crowds of idle passers-by were penned together, searched and ordered to show their hands. Any black marks on the palm which might be taken to be powder stains were sufficient evidence for execution. Any man who had retained any portion of the National Guard clothing was shot. (As though in 1919, every Londoner had been shot who had retained any portion of his army clothing.) The police received 399,823 letters of denunciation, of which but a twentieth were signed. And the writing of such a letter was sufficient to make forfeit the life of the man delated, if he could be found. The fable of *petroleuses*—women petrol-throwers, who were supposed to have fired Government buildings—led to the inclusion of women in this massacre. The firemen were almost exterminated, because some malicious person had spread the story that they had filled their hose-pipes with petrol.

Civilians whom good fortune saved from immediate death were taken for trial before one of the numerous courts-martial. The "trial" never lasted more than a few minutes, and death was the sentence in fully half the cases. The bodies were left lying in the Paris streets or half buried in haste.

Those who were not shot by order of the courts were sent to

Versailles for re-trial. Before they could pass the gate of La Muette they were stopped by the vain and theatrical General Marquis de Gallifet, who selected a number of them to be shot on the spot. One day it was the white-haired he killed, another, those who were taller or uglier than their neighbours—any fantastic reason that amused his ghastly fancy.

Then the wretched fainting convoys marched uncovered under the blazing summer sun to Versailles, often forbidden water or rest, sometimes even shot *en masse* as a nuisance to their captors. They arrived at Versailles only to suffer fresh tortures, beaten and spat on by the "swell mob," and crowded into stinking underground dungeons.

Such horrors had occurred before in out-of-the-way corners of the world, against black men in colonial wars, but never before in the centre of Europe.

Maddened by these brutalities, the remaining Communards demanded the forfeited lives of the hostages remaining in their hands. Ferré, disdaining to evade responsibility, gave the order, and they were shot. The few defenders of the Commune were now forced back into the eastern quarters of Paris. The Luxembourg and the south side of the river were lost, Montmartre had been taken by surprise, and the Hôtel de Ville was in flames. Belleville, the workers' quarter, was the only Communard stronghold. The sun hid itself, and the heavy downpour brought by great guns had begun.

On the 25th, 26th and 27th the Versaillese met at last with an organised resistance. Their troops, in overwhelming numbers, were checked everywhere. The National Guards made a heroic, amazing resistance. The story of those days is one continuous record of noble bravery and unquestioning devotion. The progress of the Versaillese was slow and dearly bought.

But the end was not in doubt. Gradually the Versaillese pressed forward. On the 26th they took the Place de la Bastille and the old Faubourg Saint Antoine. On the 27th, descending from the north, they took the cemetery of Père Lachaise. In the early hours of Sunday they took the remaining Communard barricades, on the heights of Belleville. Next day the outlying fort of Vincennes surrendered, and the last red flag was pulled down.

For these last few days Thiers had loosed Gallifet himself upon

the city. What he did can hardly be described. Suffice it that for months after Belleville was a town of the dead. The traveller, passing through, saw no light or sign of life in the deserted houses; street after street was empty and desolate, as though a pestilence had swept the inhabitants away. Gallifet had depopulated the workers' quarters as though he had been Tamerlane or any other mad Eastern ruler. The unfortunate victims were taken mostly to the Père Lachaise cemetery, where—since flesh and blood was failing—machine guns were used for execution. To this day the wall where so many Communards were murdered is known as *le mur des federes* (Wall of the National Guards), and is a sacred place of pilgrimage for Socialists the world over.

OUT OF THE PAST

THE PRISONER

L. A. BLANQUI

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PUGET-THENIERS is a small town in the French Maritime Alps. Although it has the almost tropical flora of the Riviera, and is only two days' walk from Nice, it had, in 1805, none of the popularity of the Riviera towns as a place of resort. It was isolated by the side of the River Var, dwarfed and shut in by great mountain masses. In the winter it was cut off completely from the rest of the world; the turbid and swollen waters of the river might have flowed away with another world for all the possibility of communication there was. Here the resident Sub-Prefect, Jean-Dominique Blanqui, though in fact but a minor officer of the French Government, could think himself a personage of the greatest importance, being indeed practically the king of his little isolated realm.

He had not always been a pliable servant of the Emperor Napoleon. In 1793 the county of Nice had been taken from the Duke of Savoy by the armies of the new French Republic, and Citizen Jean-Dominique Blanqui, with two others, had been sent by his freed fellow-citizens to represent them in the Convention. Unfortunately for himself, he only took this seat there upon the 24th of May. Utterly ignorant of the political situation, and equipped only with a few general Republican ideas, he ranged himself naturally with the party of Vergniaud and Gaudet, the Girondins, and was shocked beyond words when barely a week from his arrival in Paris members of this party, from whom he had never heard anything but the loftiest Republican sentiments, were chased from their seats by the Paris mob. Later in life Blanqui admitted that he was tempted sometimes to join the Jacobins, but could never tolerate their rough manners, their coarseness and violence. Therefore he made his choice for the

elegant and more cultured Girondins, protested publicly his solidarity with the arrested men, and was included by Robespierre in a list of arrests made in the October of 1793.

For ten months Blanqui remained in prison. The period of the social and political victories of the Jacobins and of the great military effort passed by without his knowledge. When, after the "Tyrant Robespierre" had fallen in Thermidor, he was released, all that he could have felt was that something was absent, some tang of hope that had been in the air when he had driven into Paris from Nice a year ago. Republican phrases were still used, Marat well spoken of and libertarian ideals expressed; but the direction of affairs was now in the hands of agile politicians, mostly corrupt, self-seeking and without principle. It was no longer the dawn of liberty, when all things were possible.

Blanqui took his colour from his environment. He resumed a silent place in the Assembly, recovered his "expenses" and looked out for a job. He received his Sub-Prefecture in 1798, and next year found it prudent to salute Napoleon's *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire as "day a thousand times happy!" So he settled down to the comfortable and apparently secure life of an official of the Empire, and on the 12th of Pluviose year XIII., or the 1st of February 1805, as men were calling it again, after the birth of a boy and a girl, a second son was born to him, whom he named Louis Auguste Blanqui.

The early years of the boy were passed in the uneventful and comfortable circumstances of Puget-Theniers. The easy and dignified life of his father seemed to be as stable as anything in this world, and few doubted that he would pass all his life as a respected official of the French Government. This security and comfort, however, was roughly broken in 1814 by the fall of Napoleon. True to his instincts as an official, the elder Blanqui at once made a vain application to the new Government for employment. He secured a fresh position for a moment during the "Hundred Days" of 1815, but on Napolon's final fall found himself completely unemployed and resourceless at the age of fifty-eight.

He and his children might actually have starved if his wife had not just at this time inherited a small country place at Grandmont. Here the whole family moved in 1815, and in that year the elder Blanqui said good-bye to his old settled and happy

life. Madame Blanqui had always been a "character": she now kicked over the traces altogether. Her temper turned ungovernable. She became a violent tyrant over both her husband and her children. Not only did her terrifying explosions of rage make life at Grandmont almost unbearable, but she spent money recklessly and improvidently until she had turned the well-furnished house at Grandmont into a dilapidated and untidy barn. The reproaches of her tidy and economical husband were met with a plain intimation that as he was now a parasite and living off his wife, silence was his best virtue.

It was partly need of money and partly, no doubt, the effect of this atmosphere upon the child which made Blanqui send the child Auguste in 1818 to join his elder brother, Jerome-Adolphe, who had secured a precarious employment in Paris as a school teacher.

For six years Auguste remained there, growing from a grubby schoolboy into a young man of nineteen. During those years his father and mother were separated from him, and indeed few men showed in later life less marks of parental influence. From his father he may have learnt his devotion to the Republic, and his mother's ferocious temper reappears in his passionate devotion to the oppressed. But of direct influence there seems to have been little. Blanqui's character as a youth was moulded by his Paris environment.

The city's opposition to the Bourbons had not ended with Waterloo. Bonapartists, Girondins and Jacobins were submerged and welded into one indistinguishable mass, but the opposition persisted. In 1821 the formidable Italian secret Republican society, the Carbonari, spread to Paris. Blanqui had scarcely left school when he enrolled himself, and all his later life bears the impression of the methods of this society—a society of which the Emperor Napoleon III. was permanently terrified.[1] Under the cautious Louis XVIII. the opposition was small and ineffective, but the accession of Charles X. gave the Liberals and Republicans their opportunity. The new king was bigoted in religion, narrowly prejudiced in politics and arrogant in person. Hardly a year passed without a conspiracy, a riot or some incident or other which fanned the dislike of the Bourbons and the nobility.

[1] See Nassau Senior: *Conversations with M. Thiers, M. Guizot and other Distinguished Persons*, and *Conversations during the Second Empire*, passim.

The aristocrats aided to the best of their ability; they lost all trace of moderation; they were too happy enjoying the last rays of the sun, which was, poor things, now setting for ever, to trouble whether they offended traders and common people. At last they had a king who refused nothing to men of good blood. No power, no offices were open to the vulgar classes who had wrecked Paris through the folly of the too-gentle king in 1789. Once more all the prerogatives and appointments of France were the perquisites of the descendants of the Condés and other families of unquestionable nobility. It went to their heads; they began to speak of resuming all their old estates and the confiscated lands sold in the Revolution to new proprietors all over the country.

The struggle against the restored aristocrats was even extended to the literary world. Here the followers of Charles X. were the Romantic School. The colours and life of the old French Court, the days of Louis XIV. and of Joan of Arc appealed to these neo-Catholics and sentimentalists. Against them the revolutionaries became Classicists, remembering the Roman Republic and the cult which their own revolution had made of the rigidity and formality of all things Roman. They praised the stilted painter David and the poor tinsel of the speeches of "Gracchus" Babeuf. Revolutionaries in politics, they tied themselves to the most outworn and tedious formalism in art. Nor was this for them a matter of unimportance. When Charles X. fell and Blanqui broke in to the house of Mlle de Montgolfier to announce the victory, letting his rifle fall with a clang to the floor as he stood at the door, he cried: "*Enfoncés les Romantiques!*" ("The Romantics are done in!"). Was ever another revolution celebrated by so strange a cry?

From 1824 to 1830 Blanqui was no more than a loyal and vigorous member of the Republican movement. There was nothing in his opinions and scarcely anything in his appearance to mark him off from the other students who were showing turbulent opposition to the king. Small and pale, carefully cultivating a short beard, he passed unnoticed among many other more noisy and imposing agitators. His enormous vitality and activity were shown only in his restless and piercing eyes—no writer who has ever described him fails to comment upon his eyes, which all through his life seem to have had an almost

uncanny look of power. Some little claim he could have made to distinction when he was wounded in a street battle with the soldiers in 1827. Actually, however, his elder brother, afterwards an orthodox economist, was regarded as the most promising and most dangerous, and Auguste Blanqui remained unnoticed in the minor position he had secured on the *Globe*, a Liberal paper.

In the revolt of 1830, which drove out Charles X., Blanqui fought gallantly with the rank and file. He even received the Medal of July for his service in the three days of battle—the sole official decoration of his whole life. To the bitter regret of the Republicans the Revolution, although it drove the nobility back to sulk behind closed doors in the Faubourg St Germain, did not bring a Republic, but another king, Louis Philippe of Orleans, certified "a Republican King" by the old General Lafayette. The opposition was split hopelessly on this question. The wealthy Liberal bourgeoisie and the artisans and small employers parted company for many years, the first following Louis Philippe, the second and third classes with more or less hesitation pushing on to a Republic. Blanqui, even before the victory over Charles X., had been shown the irresolution and untrustworthiness of the best-known opposition leaders. They had not only turned down, at the *Globe* office, his proposal to form an insurrectionary committee, but when he had answered that he would then go out to fight himself with his rifle "and a tricolour cockade," Victor Cousin had pompously replied: "Monsieur, the white flag is the flag of France!"[1]

The new king walked gently at first. Considerable political liberty was allowed, though the vote was confined to the rich bourgeoisie. The Republicans formed themselves into open societies and leagues, and had their own periodicals. Blanqui attached himself to the most powerful society, the *Friends of the People* (Amis du Peuple), led by the famous Republican, Godefroy Cavaignac.[2] It was not long before the Republicans realised that the new king's "Republican liberty" was a very thin pretence. Most of the other Republican organisations succumbed to official persecution; the *Friends of the People* went underground

[1] *I.e.* the Bourbon flag of Charles X. The tricolour, afterwards adopted by Louis Philippe, was in 1830 purely Republican.

[2] Brother of General E. Cavaignac, the "butcher of June."

in good time—as early as September 1830. The period of secret societies had returned again after an interruption of no more than two months.

Within these societies, which permeated French political life from the fall of Napoleon till the year 1848, was born modern revolutionary Socialism. The origins of the Paris Commune, and through it all the modern revolutionary movement, are to be found in these obscure societies, beginning with the Carbonari. But the strain of Socialism in them is very thin and their history little known. The roots are extremely fine and we have no historical microscope to use upon them. The presence in the secret society movement of Philippe Buonarrotti and his undoubted activity make certain the connection with the Babouvist movement, and to that extent take us beyond pure Republicanism. But the Carbonaro had no need of political orthodoxy; all that he was required to have was a rifle and fifty cartridges. Others did the thinking for him.

In the societies arising after 1830 some more evidences of the modern revolutionary programme can be found, particularly in those founded by Blanqui after the collapse of the *Friends of the People* in 1834. Yet even as early as January 1832 we can observe some significant words spoken by Blanqui, when on trial for being concerned in the publications of the *Friends*. He was prosecuted at that date along with others in an attempt by the Government to suppress the society altogether. The following dialogue occurred in court:—

THE PRESIDENT. What is your profession?

BLANQUI. Proletarian.

THE PRESIDENT. That is not a profession.

BLANQUI. What? Not a profession! It is the profession of thirty million Frenchmen who live by their labour and have no political rights.

THE PRESIDENT. Well, well, all right. The Clerk will enter the prisoner as proletarian.

The jury, to the indignation of the Government, acquitted the prisoners, but the disappointed Public Prosecutor immediately induced the paid judges to sentence Blanqui to a year's imprisonment for his "behaviour during the trial." This was his first sentence and his first experience of prison, the place where he was to spend most of his life. Later he was to be asked in court:

"What is your domicile?" and to reply: "Unless it is prison, I have none."

The early years of the "Monarchy of July," as it was called, were very stormy. The Republicans broke into open revolt in Paris in June 1832; the Lyonnese proletariat had already held their city for days against the royal troops the year before. In the year 1834 the most vigorous attempt was made by them upon the royal régime. Lyons broke out into another revolt, this time frankly Republican, and on the news of the revolt reaching Paris, the Republicans there took arms. Both revolts were crushed, and in Paris the troops "got out of hand" and there was a massacre, burnt into the memory of every Parisian by Daumier's most famous cartoon.[1] In the trials that followed and marked the end of the power of the secret Republican societies, Blanqui—newly married in this year 1834—acted as one of the defenders of the accused, and for his speeches on this occasion he was once again vainly prosecuted by the Government.

Undaunted by the collapse of the *Friends*, Blanqui in 1835 organised among the rapidly dwindling band of Republicans a fresh secret society, this time called the *Society of the Families* (Société des Familles). He was aided by a well-to-do young Gascon, Armand Barbès, a most excitable, rhetorical and romantic man, florid in every gesture and the completest contrast to Blanqui imaginable. For Blanqui, though enthusiastic, was very chary of showing emotion, while for Barbès to weep was an everyday occurrence. Yet, for the moment, devoted as they both were to the Republic, these two very different characters worked together, until in March 1836 the police discovered their secret powder manufactory and had all the active members of the society gaoled for two years. An amnesty secured their release on May 8th, 1837. But Blanqui was already signalised too notably as a dangerous man for him to be set absolutely free; he was ordered to reside under surveillance at Jancy on the Oise.

Here, so much as he ever had one, he spent his honeymoon. He had married in 1834 Amélie-Suzanne Serre, a young girl of nineteen, to whom he had been tutor for a while. It was, of course, a love match; no "arranged marriage" would have suited Blanqui. From his marriage day till the May of 1837 he had scarcely given a day to his wife. Plots and organisation of

[1] *La Rue Transnonain, le* 15 *Avril* 1834.

plots had busied him fully till the day when he was imprisoned. Now, in the quiet provincial town, his enforced idleness made him take the rest he needed. The woods along the river-side, the calm evenings on the dusty provincial roads, the love of his wife and his baby son—all around him were quietening influences that not merely re-created his strength and increased his powers. This year at Jancy, the only really happy year of his life, did more than that. It took him away from politics and slowened the development of his political ideas. It tempted him away to his own enjoyment and happiness. He had the necessary resources to live a quiet bourgeois life, and the brains to make a success of a respectable occupation. His philosophy at this time was no more than ordinary Republicanism, tinged by the teachings of Babeuf and possibly a reading of Saint-Simon. He had himself tested the uselessness of a Republican attack upon the monarchy of Louis Philippe. Why not abandon the task—for the moment at least ?

The revolutionary movement very nearly lost in 1837 a leader only less in importance than Marx. Blanqui's whole character, his honesty and straightforwardness, his enthusiasm and his indomitable toughness of spirit all dragged him back to his political work, but what no doubt turned the scale was the vigour and hopefulness of youth. He was still only just thirty-two ; his mind had hardly begun its development, and he was not the sort of " brilliant young man " who, after a few essays at scandalising the circles from which he sprung, sinks quietly back into well-paid and safe mediocrity. He began in 1838 to organise another and more formidable secret society, called the *Society of the Seasons* (Société des Saisons). More patiently than ever was this society organised, and the secrecy observed was absolute. Few knew that the actual directors of the society were Blanqui, Barbès, and a man of lesser calibre called Martin Bernard. Political discussion was strictly limited for fear of disrupting the society, and all that is really known of its internal affairs is the curious names of the sections and subsections. Every six members were under the orders of a chief named *Sunday*, and formed a *Week*. Four *Weeks*, under the orders of a *July*, made up a *Month*. Three *Months*, again, made up a *Season*, which was directed by a leader called *Spring*. Finally the four *Seasons* made up a *Year*. Of these *years* there seem to have been three, under the three

leaders, Blanqui, Barbès and Bernard. This would make the membership of the society about one thousand.

We know, however, that there was a change in the personnel of the rank and file, and a most significant change. De la Hodde, the police spy, who afterwards wrote sycophantic memoirs of his unpleasant activities, says[1]:

"At this moment the rank and file of the secret societies was almost entirely renewed. The recruiting among the ill-conditioned members of the bourgeoisie was replaced entirely by recruiting from the scum of the popular class. . . . It is a noteworthy date, this, when the bourgeois element altogether abandoned illegal means."

In other words, the working class was beginning to provide the revolutionary material, whereas in 1830 the employers had led out their own workers to the battle. We find also a significant phrase in the catechism answered by every new member:

Q. Immediately after the revolution, can the people govern itself?

A. The social system being diseased, heroic remedies are needed to bring it to health. The people will need a revolutionary power for a time.

The first breach has been made in the wall of democracy. The revolutionaries are no longer absolutely confident in universal suffrage. Blanquism is approaching.

In May 1839 the chiefs decided that the moment had come. Barbès, who was out of Paris, did not come when summoned, and Blanqui sent a second and sharper call—a tiny incident which had serious consequences. On Sunday, the 12th, the whole membership of the society was summoned; its effective strength was found to be about six hundred. Blanqui announced briefly that an attack on the Government was to be made. After sacking a gunsmith's, and thus becoming armed, the little army started out to capture the Prefecture of Police. No popular enthusiasm supported it; no vast rally of Republicans. The people of Paris were as astonished as the Government.

Beaten off the Prefecture of Police, the revolutionaries proceeded in three columns to the scarcely defended Hôtel de Ville,

[1] De la Hodde: *Histoire des Sociétés Secrètes*, p. 217.

the town hall of Paris, which had been the seat of the great revolutionary Commune of 1793. They seized it without difficulty, read out a proclamation and waited. Nothing happened. Alarmed at the quiescence of Paris, and at the rumoured arrival of troops, they decided to quit the Hôtel de Ville and go from *mairie* to *mairie*,[1] capturing each one, and thus at last rousing the people. They captured one *mairie*, that of the 7th *arrondissement*, but this was the limit of their success. Involved in separate street battles with the soldiers and Municipal Guard, the three columns were scattered and defeated, Barbès being wounded and captured. Bernard was captured a few days later, Blanqui not till five months had passed. The society was shattered and all its leading officers in the hands of the Government.

Both Barbès and Blanqui were condemned to death. This sentence was, after some popular agitation, commuted to imprisonment for life, and the prisoners were directed to the Mont-Saint-Michel.

For life. He was still young—more than half his active life would normally have been before him. For thirty or forty years more, until death found him, his life would be closed in by the eight feet by twelve of a prison cell. He had said good-bye to his wife and child. He would never see them again. Men whom he had known would take up the task he had left, and work in the Paris streets he knew, but he would never hear from them, never know that his work was carried on. Day after day would pass over him, always the same. Now that he had gone to this island prison, isolated by the sea as well as by man from the rest of France, had seen his name entered in the books by the Governor, had followed the warder down the stone staircase, heard the door clang to and the bolt slide into its place, there would never again be any change in his life.

"One day, another day, many days, a week, weeks—years! Existence flowing past, the activity of a man immobilised, fixed in one minute which is always the same, which knows nothing of the distraction, the change and perplexity of the future, and the thrill of the unexpected. The fate of the prisoner has been decided in advance by red-robed judges; they have decided what

[1] The *mairie* is like the town hall of a London borough—*e.g.* the Poplar Town Hall, as compared with the Mansion House.

space he shall have, at what hours of the day he shall take his food, at what hours of the night the rounds of the warders shall interrupt his sleep, what area of the sky his eyes may reach. An invisible and unchangeable calendar has regulated for him the course of time, the idleness of hours, the tedium of days. A silent clock, which the prisoner alone can hear, beats for him inexorably the Always and Never of a monotonous eternity." [1]

Almost to be welcomed as an interlude were the occasional cruelties of the warders and Governor. Both Barbès and Blanqui were beaten, the former severely. One Martin Noel was beaten senseless and dragged feet first down the stone staircase, his head hitting each step with a thud. Stack cut his throat; Austen went mad. For six months Austen's madness was declared simulated, and his screams and wails echoed from his cell along the corridors, dragging the other prisoners nearer madness, till he was mercifully removed.

Blanqui himself was relegated, as a punishment, for a while to a mediæval dungeon cut out of the living rock of the Mont-Saint-Michel. Almost entirely closed from light or air, it was bitterly cold and damp in winter, and his health began to give way. In summer a new torture, when the heat of the sun and the stifling airlessness of the cell made it an oven.

Soon, however, he was brought out, back to his old cell, and the same endless round began again.

"How hard the wall is! How heavy granite is! Two poor hands of flesh and blood, for all the nervous force and will in them, can do nothing against this close-packed grain of stone, against these thick blocks of damp rock. Days pass in contemplating this wall against which he must live, leaning his head, tearing his nails, and such days end in a reverie on the unknowable mystery of things. The wall is made of infinitesimal pieces, of irregular asperities and hard crystals, each with its form and colour, its duration and life. Some are pointed, spherical or elliptical; there are cubes, pyramids, cones. Some are iron-grey, silver-grey or tinged with old gold, run through by almost imperceptible live veins that are copper furrows or lead. But most are blue and pink—the fine transparent blue of the sea or sky, the sweet and dying rose-colour of warm twilights. There

[1] Geffroy: *L'Enfermé*, p. 80.

are even eyes whose irises have drops of this quiet sapphire-blue, lips where the rose-colour fades. . . ."[1]

One day, in February 1841, his cell door was opened, and they told him shortly: "Your wife is dead." He remained rigid, immobile, neither uttering a sound nor changing colour, until they had closed the door and left him alone again. He knew she had been ill, had hoped to see her. She was only twenty-six when she died—a slender dark girl—and she had been dying ever since he had been imprisoned. Amélie-Suzanne.

There are some blows the mind cannot take, some sorrows that kill if they are fully understood. For Blanqui the way out was found in hallucinations. All day, every day, he saw his wife in his cell. He could see her form, speak to her. She was not dead, for every day they talked together of old times, the memories of their first love-making.

If he spoke, as he thought, to his wife, for others he was silent. He sat rigid, immovable, in the corner of his cell, conversing neither with his gaolers nor even, when opportunity offered, with his fellow-prisoners.

Sometimes his thoughts went back to the *Society of the Seasons* and his past work. Why had not Barbès come when he was called first? Blanqui felt that he had always suspected Barbès. A boastful man, a born chatterer and actor, without any more sense than a sparrow. Blanqui had often grimaced over his florid sentimentalism. Now it appeared the man was a coward as well as a fool. Blanqui's unquiet eyes filled with hatred; he had brooded over this tiny incident till he had made it the basis for a lasting contempt, just as in another cell Barbès was nursing his resentment into an unbalanced thirst for revenge.

Blanqui's spirit might defy all his sufferings, but his body could not. His lungs and throat were badly affected, and in 1844 the prison doctor ordered his removal from the Mont to the milder climate of Tours. This could not stop his disease. He grew rapidly worse, until in December the doctor definitely announced that he was dying. Having obtained confirmation of this, the Government of Louis Philippe, economical in mercy as in all other things, issued him a pardon, against which he had still strength to protest. He lingered on in the hospital, and then slowly, to everyone's astonishment, began to recover, but was not

[1] Geffroy, p. 85.

able to leave the prison infirmary until 1847, when he went to Blois. Here he began to try to find his life again, to re-knit the ties that had been broken ten years before. February 1848, the month in which the people of Paris rose and drove out Louis Philippe, found him still thus occupied.

At once he went to Paris. He arrived there on the 25th, only one day after the fighting was over. His first attempt was to find his feet in this new revolutionary turmoil. Some of the names of the new Government he knew—some members he had even known personally ten years before; some were utterly unknown quantities. What reliance was to be placed on Caussidière, the ex-revolutionary, now Prefect of Police? Exactly how far were the left-wing Socialists of the Government, Louis Blanc and Albert mere Utopians? Were the political Republicans, Marie, Garnier Pagès, Ledru Rollin and the rest, actively betraying the revolution, and could they be overturned right away? His old companions and new followers, who clustered round him the very day of his arrival, urged him to lead a new attack and make a new truly Republican government.

Blanqui found himself not merely excluded from the Government, but received with marked coldness by its individual members. Suspicions aroused by this were confirmed when on the day of his arrival Lamartine, for the Government, refused to fly the red flag, holding to the tricolour of Louis Philippe and uttering the famous phrase: "The tricolour has gone the round of the world, the red flag has only gone the bloody round of the Champs de Mars."

On the evening of the 26th, therefore, his adherents assembled, armed, in the dancing hall of the Rue Prado to decide whether they would march right away and destroy the Government. Blanqui arrived late, when it appeared that the question was already almost answered in the affirmative. He addressed them very quietly and in no impressive voice. Nevertheless he was able to dissuade them from making any attempt, and historians of the time went so far as to declare that he saved the Government.

"France," he declared, "is not Republican." Without question they could follow up the *coup d'état* of two days before by another, but this second one would be followed by a revolt of the provinces. From this cardinal fact he had drawn the whole of the policy by which he was guided during the '48 Revolution.

Wiser than his fellows, he had already seen that to overturn the Government was merely to court a speedy and certain return of the monarchy. The existing Government, therefore, dishonest though it was, must be supported, pushed forward to radical measures which it disliked, and prevented from withdrawing from the Republican position it had assumed. "You wish to overturn us," said an official (Recurt) to him a day or two later. "No; to bar the road behind you," replied Blanqui. The breathing space afforded by the present Government must be utilised for the fullest possible education of the people in a Socialist-Republican direction, for the widest possible propaganda and organisation.[1]

In pursuance of this aim he founded his *Club*, the Central Republican Society, which at once became the most popular and influential of all the many clubs which sprang up like mushrooms all over Paris. Blanqui began at last to receive the attention and following from the Paris workers that was his right.

He was forty-two years old, and in the prime of his physical energies. White hairs and a body twisted by disease were merely the legacies of prison, and did not affect his vigour. Pale, small and white-faced, only his dark deep-set eyes, never resting and flashing "shafts like lightning," as an observer put it, showed the source of his dominance over his fellows.

"At first sight," wrote a member of his meetings,[2] "Blanqui was unattractive. Suffering is not always attractive, and to be so it must take certain forms and be marked with a certain stamp. One felt moved to obey him, but not instinctively forced to love him. He did not attract, but dominate.

"Nothing external in him showed the orator, and yet his power as such was immense. His voice was strident, sharp, metallic, and yet dulled like the note of a tom-tom, and communicated his fever to his audience. His eloquence, fed from sources which if not the purest were the most ardent and generous, had a savage character, had harsh inharmonious tones which tried the ears and twisted the heart like pincers. It was as cold as a sword blade and as dangerous. Yet this eloquence warmed to white heat the sombre enthusiasm of his devoted listeners.

[1] The Bolsheviks in 1917 used the Kerensky régime in exactly the same manner.

[2] A. Delvau: *Histoire de la Révolution de Février.*

The Taborites or Hussites would have preferred him to John Ziska or Procopius the Great. But the energy of his speeches, the much-applauded virulence of his motions were always backed up by a certain cleverness, a sort of cunning suppleness which showed that the man was not carried away by his imagination and the *furia* of his soul; on the contrary, he mastered it entirely by his own will power. . . .

"In short, Blanqui's eloquence, and his character as well, was not fire beneath ashes, but ice beneath fire."

This fundamental coolness and complete mastery over his emotions, which marked him off so notably from a man like Barbès, gave him power over others than himself. To many his phlegm seemed a proof of uncanny powers, and even to his greatest friends remained a perennial astonishment. This is well illustrated by a story told many years later by a lifelong follower.[1] Benjamin Flotte was a cook by trade, long-faced and white-haired, and perhaps not more emotional than most Frenchmen of his day.

"When I saw him—Blanqui—again," he used to say, "for the first time since the trial of Bourges, it was at his sister's, Madame Antoine's. She had told me the evening before that he had come. I didn't sleep all night. To see him again! . . .

"When I passed the door of the little room that you know so well, my heart was beating hard. I recognised him. There he was, sitting at the table, reading. . . . In a moment we would be in each other's arms—embrace each other as old comrades and fellow-fighters. Think! I had been by his side on 15th May in the Chamber. Always, I had been with him. . . .

"He didn't move. 'It's Flotte,' his sister said. 'Oh, it's you!' he said, and held out, without rising, a hand that I grasped. That was all our meeting."

Backed by a growing and loyal following, Blanqui began to exert pressure upon the Government, and at once learnt that he had to fear, not his political opponents but those nearest to him in thought. On March 17th he headed a demonstration having two objectives—the first, the modification of the personnel of the Government; the second, the adjournment of the elections for the Constituent Assembly until the Republican propaganda had had its full effect. This demonstration was defeated, hemmed

[1] Vuillaume: *Mes Cahiers*, p. 232.

in and deprived of its influence by Louis Blanc, nominally the most extreme member of the Government. His adherents, from the Assembly of Workers' Delegates at the Luxembourg, made a sufficient show of force to outweigh the demonstration, which Blanc regarded as an attempt to side-track his own pet plan of "social workshops."

From that day the Government decided that Blanuqi must be crushed, and the vilest means were chosen. On March 31st a hanger-on of the Moderates in the Government, a journalist named Taschereau, published a document entitled: *Affair of 12th May* 1839—*Declarations made by* * * * *to the Minister of the Interior.* The document was alleged to have been found in the archives of the Louis Philippe Government, and dealt with the internal constitution and membership of the *Society of Seasons.* Certain indications in it made it clear that Blanqui was to be understood as the man who made the revelations. In other words, this was an attempt to prove that he had sold himself to the enemy when arrested.

Instantly Blanqui denounced the publication as a forgery, and announced that he would publish a detailed reply forthwith. No doubt he would have survived the attack, and even acquired prestige by it, but a worse blow was to come. Barbès had never forgiven the slight of 1839. Now he had his revenge by stating publicly, "There are things in that statement that only Blanqui and I knew of." A crafty, mean statement. Everyone knew that Barbès, the Bayard of democracy, would not have been guilty of that particular treachery. It was not of such faults the incurable romantic was guilty. Then—the inference was clear—Blanqui!

The terrible vengeance of a personal quarrel struck home. Barbès had been co-chief with Blanqui in the *Society of Seasons.* He must know. Half Blanqui's followers deserted him; much more than half his influence was lost. It was proposed to constitute a jury of honour to try him, composed largely of Barbès' friends and his own enemies. Blanqui ignored the offer.

A fortnight passed before he issued his reply. It was masterly and complete. It pointed out the manifest marks of police fabrication in the document itself, its total unlikeness to his own style and manner. It reminded the reader of the services of Blanqui and his whole career—his defiance to the Government just at this same time, 1839, when he was supposed to be crawling

to them. Passing out of his usual style into a bitter personal note, he cried: "'You have sold your brothers for gold!' writes the prostitute pen of the muckraker. For gold—to be sent to black bread and the water of sorrow! And what have I done with this gold? I live in an attic on sixpence a day. My fortune, at this moment, is fifty shillings. And it is I, this wreck, dragging through the streets worn garments and ruined body, that am branded as sold, while the valets of Louis Philippe, grown into Republican butterflies, flutter above the carpets of the Hôtel de Ville, and denounce from their four-course virtue the Job escaped from their master's prison! . . .

"This Taschereau document was necessary for you; so it was discovered. *Is fecit cui prodest.* The infamy of its origin is shown in the shameful indirectness of its publication.

"*Réacteurs, vous êtes des laches!*"[1]

Of those who have investigated the affair recently, only one, biographer and devoted admirer of Barbès (Jeanjean) does not declare the whole accusation baseless. And even he will not charge Blanqui outright with it; he merely insinuates. Barbès' statement was obviously mere malice: the *Society of the Seasons* was ridden by police spies, one of whom, Lamieussens, was very high in the councils of the conspirators. The whole document is a fabrication.

But of what use is a vindication seventy years afterwards? Blanqui's influence was half-shattered. The revolutionary movement fell into other hands—to Barbès, as he had hoped, and to the feather-headed group round Caussidière, the new Prefect of Police. Blanqui was passed by, and the turmoils which occupied Paris till May, the demonstrations and the quarrels over the Government's "National Workshops" were rarely led or instigated by him.

The new Assembly met on May 4th. Very soon it showed its determination to put the Paris revolutionaries in their place. Various incidents, which there is no room to chronicle here, brought things to a climax in only ten days. On May 15th other leaders than Blanqui decided upon a monster demonstration against the Assembly and in favour of war on behalf of Poland. Full of misgivings, Blanqui nevertheless attached himself and his followers to what was clearly a great popular movement. The

[1] Reactionaries, you are cowards!

demonstration, unarmed by the instructions of the original organisers, forced its way into the Assembly. Speeches were delivered, and Blanqui tried to give the manifestation a social turn, and spoke of the misery of the workers. Then someone shouted: "The Assembly is dissolved!" In an instant all was confusion; the deputies fled and Barbès ran to the Hôtel de Ville to form a new government. Meanwhile, of course, the Government called out the bourgeois section of the National Guard and dispersed the unarmed crowds. All was over in a few hours, and the Government proceeded to a general round-up of the revolutionaries. Blanqui, Barbès and many others found themselves again in prison.

There they remained till March of next year, when they were tried. The workers of Paris rose in June of '48, fought and went leaderless to certain defeat. Their brutal suppressor, General Cavaignac, took over the power, and in turn gave way to an even more sinister figure, the Prince Louis Napoleon Bonaparte. And through this period Blanqui was a helpless prisoner.

In March 1849, Barbès, Blanqui and the rest appeared before the High Court at Bourges to learn their fate. Blanqui delivered a defiant speech, defending the workers, not himself, and flinging before the Court his contempt of them and his hatred of their social system. Barbès, misled by his bitter hatred of Blanqui, took advantage of some chance phrases in the latter's speech to revive and repeat the Taschereau slanders, and gave the judges the pleasant sight of the two revolutionary leaders abusing each other before their enemies.

The sentence on Blanqui was ten years' detention, and he was removed to undergo his second long imprisonment, fortunately this time under easier conditions.

Ten years he had before him. He had books and could associate with his fellow-prisoners. He set himself to make clear in his own mind his whole social philosophy, and to perfect and polish his programme of action. He read, pen in hand, exhaustively, everything that he could lay his hands on. The vast range of subjects and the tireless patience of the student remind one of Marx himself. Blanqui entered prison a well-educated man; he left it a man of vast knowledge and reading. He entered it a politician and left it a philosopher. Transferred from prison to prison, deported to Africa, he went on undisturbedly with his

studies, until he had evolved his whole social philosophy and planned out his programme of the social revolution and the famous dictatorship of the proletariat.[1] It is significant that among his written studies in prison was a *dossier* of the failures of the various moderate Republicans in '48.

All through his prison life he found himself ostracised by one section. Barbès and his followers carefully held away from him, spreading their slanders into every ear. They managed for a time to isolate him almost completely. Nearly every Republican of eminence among the large and miscellaneous crowd of prisoners was seduced by Barbès' grand and sonorous Republican speeches. Not till 1850 did Blanqui's isolation break down. At the end of that year an insulting phrase used publicly by Barbès offended some of the rank and file. Next day, as it happened, Blanqui was delivering one of his bi-weekly lectures on economics, in a course which he had started after his arrival. To his astonishment he found the room packed with a perspiring audience. No less than five hundred prisoners, mostly working-class, had chosen this way of showing that they were on his side. From that day onwards the division was made: with Barbès were the lawyers, doctors, and bourgeois generally; with Blanqui, the workers. The class struggle was reproducing itself in miniature.

A short interlude to his prison life occurred in 1859, when he was released, and returned to France from Africa, where he had been sent, to discover that his mother was dead, and, as a last act of tyranny, had burnt all his papers—a serious loss to us and a cause of deep chagrin to Blanqui. He met his son, a young man of twenty-four. He discovered that he had been taught by his mother's family to hate Blanqui's politics. All the younger Blanqui offered as a welcome to his father was a proposal that he should come to live with him in the country and promise to abandon politics.

Blanqui turned again to the organisation of secret societies, but he was a marked man, and in 1861 was again arrested and sentenced to four years' imprisonment. Near the end of that time, fearing rearrest, he escaped and settled down in Belgium (1864).

From 1864 to 1870 he lived in Brussels, visiting Paris from time to time under an assumed name. This was the period of his

[1] See Part ii. of this study.

greatest activity and of his greatest powers. The measure of his success is shown in the rise of the Commune, while it would be unfair to throw upon his shoulders the blame for its fall. Blanqui, who in these years made possible the Paris Commune, which in its turn was (to a larger measure than is often realised) the forerunner of the Russian Revolution, can claim, as much as any one man ever can, to have altered the course of history.

He came out of prison with considerable prestige and without a rival. Barbès, perhaps cowed by his imprisonments, had abandoned politics, and lived in quiet at The Hague till his death. Blanqui had the field clear. There was nothing to prevent him applying the methods and spreading the doctrine which he had thought out in prison. This method was, in brief—we shall consider it later in detail—the organisation of a secret Republican army, permeating the Parisian working class and preparing the ruin of the Empire. Any casual uprising of the Paris population could be utilised—or manufactured, for Blanqui is said to have stated that he could rely on fifty thousand of the Paris workers following him if he chose his time.

The slow process of building up this army cannot be chronicled. It proceeded unnoticed by the gay and useless society of the Second Empire, and no record of it will be found in contemporary literature. But towards the end of the Empire, some two or three thousand armed and drilled men passed in review before Blanqui in Paris at the funeral of Victor Noir.

This army was not the heterogeneous collection of police spies and enthusiasts which had made up the *Society of the Seasons*. Blanqui's men were very carefully picked, and not all his political adherents were allowed to enter the organisation. There were "Blanquists of the second rank"—men like Clemenceau (later French Premier) and Ranc, who were not regarded as sufficiently steady or single-minded for admission, but were used from time to time for special purposes. Indeed, the influence of Blanqui had spread far beyond the limits of his party, and a striking example of this was the famous Delescluze, an enemy of Blanqui, but through and through imbued with his political ideas.

The Blanquists who formed the Blanquist army were selected for their personal qualities—courage, dependability, single-mindedness. Blanqui's party was not a modern Socialist party, open to all comers. Certain qualities were demanded from all

members, and these qualities were found mostly in two classes of the community—the students and the workers. In the Blanquist Party the former numbered perhaps half of the latter.

Inside this formidable alliance very little theorising was permitted. The precocious young Lafargue once confidently pressed upon Blanqui's notice a work dealing with the comparative merits of Mutualism and Collectivism, only to receive the snub: "You would have been better employed on a syllabus of primary education."

Throughout these six years Blanqui was carrying on a regular war with the police. The secret police of the Second Empire, so much feared and so genuinely formidable, never traced down his organisation. Only once they stumbled upon a considerable meeting of Blanquists in Paris, in November 1866, arrested forty-one of them, and had them sentenced to various small terms of imprisonment. The evidence, or lack of evidence, presented by the police showed clearly that they had no idea of the existence of the Blanquist party or of its ramifications. Suspicions were raised at this trial that two members of the party, Largillière and Roux, were spies, and they were henceforward not trusted. Otherwise the Party was unaffected, and its work went on in spite of the arrests.

The police was not merely outwitted; it was put on the defensive. The surveillance of the secret police was especially entrusted to a young Blanquist student named Raoul Rigault. Before long he knew by sight, and even by name, every individual detective in the "Lagrange Brigade," the political section. He made life nearly unbearable for these gentlemen, for they could not enter a café or public-house where suspicious characters were meeting without being introduced to the company at large by Raoul Rigault, who would announce in a loud voice their names and occupation. More than once, when he knew the company was with him, he would mark down a couple of them sitting at a café table and expel them by violence.

From this he went on to acquire a full list of their names and addresses. He attended every political or semi-political case at the 6th police court, which dealt with all such cases. By simply putting on a lawyer's gown he was able to pass in and out without question, and to take down the age, surname and Christian names of every detective as he came forward to give

evidence. Unfortunately for their address (which they were bound to give before giving evidence) they merely said "Prefecture of Police." This Rigault circumvented very ingeniously by going round from *mairie* to *mairie* at the time of the revision of the electoral lists, when these were open to everybody. He ran through them until he had found the names corresponding exactly with those in which he was interested, and then noted down the addresses. When, after September 4th, he entered the Prefecture of Police, he was able to present the astonished officials with a complete list of their spies, with names and addresses. At any time of revolutionary crisis, therefore, the Blanquist party could have rounded up the whole of the secret police, Napoleon III.'s most trusted defence, within twenty-four hours.

Only one other working-class organisation claimed the attention of the French workers—the International. This body was represented in France at the beginning by a small group of prosperous Proudhonist luxury workers and ex-workers, petted and protected by a member of the Imperial family. Blanqui at first intended to interfere in the organisation of the International sufficiently to send to the 1866 Conference certain members of his party as delegates to explain the suspicious character and behaviour of the French branch. After making this decision, however, he withdrew again and decided to have nothing to do with it. He had at no time much interest in international organisation. Two of his delegates, however, Protot and Humbert, refused to be recalled, went to the 1866 Conference at Geneva and were thrown out. The meeting held to consider this breach of discipline was disturbed by the police, as mentioned above. This was the beginning and end of Blanqui's connection with the International.

Towards the end of 1869 and the beginning of 1870 the Blanquist party became sufficiently strong and widespread to justify action. Blanqui held a full review of his forces at the beginning of 1870 at the funeral of Victor Noir, murdered by Prince Pierre Bonaparte. It was, indeed, only the obvious preparedness of the authorities that prevented an attack that day.

Before matters could go farther, the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Almost at once the French armies met disaster. The idle and corrupt governors of the Second Empire had let the

administration of the army go to ruin. The higher ranks were encumbered by corrupt placemen, who had neither the courage nor the knowledge to carry on the war that they had so frivolously provoked. Defeat followed defeat, and it was soon clear that the Empire was collapsing and dragging with it the best manhood and last defences of France. Nothing would save France but the removal of the Government. Patriot as well as Republican, in all things the follower of 1793, Blanqui rushed to Paris and tried a sudden stroke on the 14th of August (the "Affair of La Villette"). As the people of Paris, uncertain and suspicious, did not support the Blanquists, the column dispersed before the police could return to the attack. Two members of the Party, unfortunately, were arrested later and condemned to death.

Before they could be executed, the struggle between Blanqui and the Second Empire had ended in Blanqui's victory. After the crowning disaster of Sédan the Napoleonic Government had fallen. It is not generally realised to what extent the revolution of September 4th was a Blanquist coup. The indignant crowd in front of the Palais Bourbon was helpless and useless in face of the police and soldiers. Without doubt it would have been dispersed like so many others, but for the action of the Blanquists. The story of the day of the 4th of September, as recounted by the Blanquist most responsible—Balsenq—is a document [1] of such interest that it should be read in full :

"The day before September 4th Blanqui gave orders for every Blanquist to go through the Faubourgs to prepare the next day's demonstration, which must at all costs be turned into a revolution. On the morning of the 4th we hunted creatures came out of our dens to place ourselves at the head of our followers, whose rendezvous was fixed at the Place de la Concorde.

"Granger, Edmond Levraud and I arrived there about one. The Place was guarded by soldiers and police, the bridge (leading to the Chamber of Deputies in the Palais Bourbon on the south side) by the Municipal Horseguards, the neighbouring quays by strong detachments of police, and the square of the Palais Bourbon, finally, by troops of the line. The palace itself was guarded by a battalion of National Guards of the 6th *arrondissement*.

"Already the enormous mass of demonstrators had been pushed back into the Champs Élysée, the Cours-la-Reine and the Avenue

[1] Letter of Balsenq in Gaston da Costa's *La Commune Vécue*, iii. 315.

Gabrielle. The terrace of the Tuileries was black with people. A more active and angry crowd, in which were many students, was massed on the left bank, threatening the Deputies from nearer at hand. . . .

"At this moment a strong thrust was made by the demonstrators. It was the workers from the Faubourgs coming. We recognised friends and placed ourselves at their head. Very quickly we were face to face with the army and National Guard. The moment was tragic. Cries rose, 'Put up your arms! *Vive la République!*' The opposing forces touched. Energetic and repeated commands were heard from the officers, but the soldiers did not obey. The sea of people pressed forward; the troops, swamped on all sides, gave way.

"A violent surge forward carried us to the head of the bridge, which must be crossed to reach the Palais Bourbon. The police tried in vain to stop the torrent: we gained the bridge and faced the Municipal Guard. There, more anxiety and another surge forward. The guard, packed tighter and tighter and happily unable to move, let us pass on the bridge pavements, at the end of which we broke through three ranks of police and found ourselves in face of the palace railings, guarded by soldiers. One commander ordered his men to fix bayonets. A few obeyed slowly and laughing. I ran up to the officer, pointed to the mass following us, to convince him that his orders were useless. Anyway, while I was talking the railings were passed and I hastily rejoined the boys. We were in the palace, facing the main entrance guarded by the National Guard. . . .

"I leapt to the handle to open the double door, and gripped on to it. The door would not yield, and the Guards beat me with their rifle butts till I let go, exhausted, and returned to my friends, whom the Guards had prevented from aiding me.

"Fortunately I knew of a door near to the stair of the tribune and the President's chair. We rushed to it, Granger, Levraud and myself leading. There, too, were some National Guards! We thrust them aside. I put my big shoulders against the door, buttressed myself with my feet, made a supreme effort which broke it in and threw me down. In one bound Granger and Levraud were at the President's chair, still occupied by Schneider. A student named Martin who followed us was ringing the President's bell.

"Granger seized it and cried in a loud voice which dominated the tumult: 'Citizens, in face of our disasters and the misfortunes of France, the people of Paris has invaded this place to proclaim the fall of the Empire and the Republic. We demand that the deputies decree this.'

"Silence. The President had bolted. Jules Favre (a Left deputy) climbed to the tribune, pale and anxious. He said: 'Citizens, at the very moment when the people invaded this place, the deputies were deliberating the pronouncement of the fall of the Empire and the proclamation of the Republic. Since the people have penetrated into this Assembly, the Republic should not be proclaimed here but at the Hôtel de Ville.' Though these words may not be exact, I can answer for the general sense.

"Favre left the tribune. The deputies ran—literally. *Sauve qui peut!* The struggle was to get outside first."

The Government which was proclaimed consisted of Parisian Republican deputies. Blanqui's only interference in its make-up was to have some of his agents placed in strategic governmental positions, whence they were sooner or later removed, and to insist upon the addition of the brilliant journalist Rochefort to the Government. He limited himself to this not only because he knew his influence was too small to justify a purely Blanquist Government, but because he really believed in the good intentions of the Moderates and was prepared to waive everything in defence of the new Republican France.

"All opposition, all contradiction must disappear," he wrote, "before the common need. There is only one enemy, the Prussian and his ally, the partisan of the fallen dynasty who wishes Prussian bayonets to restore order in Paris."

Blanqui and some of his followers were elected commanders of various battalions of the National Guard. Blanqui himself, in his journal *La Patrie en Danger*, daily studied the military situation and made suggestions for the defence which to this day astonish by their acuteness and good sense.

But an excellent journalist may be an incompetent man, and Rochefort was useless in his office. The preoccupation of the Government was not the defence but the fear of the Paris workers.

The Red bogy was much more to them than the German bogy. As days turned to weeks and months, Blanqui and the ardently patriotic people of Paris saw the defence of the city left to itself

—nothing done in getting new reserves and the existing forces wasted. The idleness and apparently inexplicable incompetence of the Government infuriated them. A breach and an upheaval became certain.

They occurred on the 31st of October, after the news of the fall of Metz. No longer able to bear what seemed to them plain treachery, the working class of Paris seized the Hôtel de Ville and overturned the Government, acting through their military organisation, the National Guard. Blanqui, and a sentimental adventurer named Flourens, alone of the new Government were ready to take their places. Blanqui turned to attend to reorganisation, leaving the defence of the Hôtel de Ville to Flourens. The revolutionary battalions had partly dispersed, when some reactionary battalions arrived, with Breton soldiers, bringing back the old Government. It looked like turning to civil war in the face of the enemy, when Blanqui yielded. It was agreed that the old Government should return, should hold new elections and make no prosecutions. Of this agreement the first item alone was observed. The elections were not held, and the Government arrested as many of its opponents as it dared.

From then on to the surrender to the Germans, the armistice of January 27th, nothing but more suffering, more incompetence and wasted blood, deeper and deeper depression. A belated and unsuccessful revolt occurred on January 22nd, but it was hopeless. The new Government of the old Orleanist, Thiers, completed the surrender to the Germans, who even occupied part of Paris for a while. Blanqui, ill with exertion and disappointment, went south to the Lot to recover.

On March 17th, 1871 he was arrested in his bed in virtue of a court-martial decision condemning him in his absence to death for his share in the events of October 31st. Thiers, head of the Government, heard of his arrest by special message. "Now we've got the worst scoundrel!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands, and proceeded with his arrangements for the coup which was that night to disarm and crush the Republican National Guard of Paris. Next day Blanqui heard at his prison in Figeac that this coup had miscarried, owing to the resistance of the National Guard, and the Government had fled to Versailles, leaving Paris in the hands of the Central Committee of the National Guard. He was taken to Cahors, where he was rigorously imprisoned.

On March 26th the Commune of Paris was elected. Blanqui himself was returned for two seats: most of his better-known followers were also members. Rigault and Ferré at the Police, in particular, did their best to carry out Blanqui's principles and act as they thought he would have done. But they felt, truly enough, that they were merely lieutenants in charge of an army. "Wait till he comes," was Rigault's invariable reply when faced with a difficulty. The worst disaster for the Commune occurred one day before the revolt began—the day when Blanqui was arrested. Blanqui alone could have directed the actions of his followers, who blundered again and again. Blanqui alone could have silenced and driven out the vain and incompetent talkers who swarmed into every position they could find under the Commune. Blanqui alone could have brought order into the chaotic Department of War. With Blanqui the Commune could, without question, have defeated Thiers and taken Versailles. What would have happened then we can hardly guess, for it was Blanqui's fate to be separated from the Commune, which was more than anything else his life-work and handiwork.

Flotte, the Blanquist—after Granger had been sent out to bribe gaolers if possible—was sent to Thiers to negotiate an exchange of prisoners. The Commune held the Archbishop of Paris, the capitalist Jecker and many others. Thiers could have the Archbishop for Blanqui; he could have Jecker; he could have every prisoner the Commune had if he would free Blanqui. Thiers delayed as long as he could and then refused. "To give you Blanqui," he told Flotte, "would be to give you a force equal to a *corps d'armée*."

Blanqui remained buried in his Cahors prison till May 22nd. Then he was sent by train to Tours. The same day the Versailles troops, led by a spy, broke into Paris. Next day he was sent on farther north to Rennes, and into Brittany, to Chatelaudren. From there the train went on. Plouaret. Plounérin. Plouigneau. Morlaix. At Morlaix he was told to change and wait for the boat. It was eleven o'clock at night.

In Paris the Versailles troops were driving the Communards back in disorder. The defence had been shattered and disorganised. Rigault was lying dead in the Rue Gay Lussac. Some of Blanqui's followers were organising a last gallant fight. The Versaillese had set up their bloody courts-martial and

executions by machine-guns had begun. The night, which was cold and still at Morlaix, was lit up in Paris with flames from burning buildings.

Early on the morning of May 24th, Blanqui was taken across the water to his cell in the Taureau prison, built, like the Mont-Saint-Michel, on a rock in the sea. Four days later the Versaillese troops took the last barricade in Paris.

Blanqui's revolution was over. The work to which he had given his life had failed—failed because ill-luck had prevented him being where he should have been, at the Hôtel de Ville, directing the Commune.

He was sixty-seven years old, and, come what might, his active life was done. It seemed, moreover, that he would have to die in prison, for when brought up for trial in 1872 he was sentenced to deportation to a fortified place for life, and removed to the penitentiary at Clairvaux.

Eight years he spent in prison again. They passed easily, those eight years. Blanqui was growing very old. He was no longer restless, no longer forced to activity. The Commune had come and gone—well, it was time to rest. He read, wrote and sat for hours dreaming to himself.

It was indeed the dream of an old man that he wrote in prison, his *Eternity by the Stars*. Like many others who have suffered, he turned his thoughts to the worlds outside this world, and gained some consolation from the insignificance of himself and the world about him. Writing a description and criticism of the theories of Laplace gave him especial pleasure, and his style is perhaps at its best in this work. He observed that two principles were agreed upon by the astronomers of his day—the first, the *infinity* of the universe; the second, the analysis of the materials of the universe by means of the spectrum. Now, the spectrum reveals but a limited number of primary elements—in Blanqui's day, sixty-four. Since we are dealing with infinity, all possible combinations of these materials are repeated somewhere. An enormous number of these combinations could be made, but, after all, it would be a finite number. Therefore in infinity there are not merely all possible combinations, but infinite repetitions of them. And of these combinations the earth, with all its people, is one.

Infinite repetitions of the earth. On these earths "whatever one could have been here, one is somewhere else." Infinite

duplication of all things and all men. There are worlds, then, where the English have lost Waterloo and Trafalgar, where Bonaparte lost Marengo. Worlds, too, he might have added, where Blanqui slipped through the hands of his captors and came to Paris in March 1871.

It was not merely an old man's dream, perhaps, this "Astronomical Hypothesis." Certainly it is something of a prose poem; and though we cannot say how seriously it was meant, we would be most unwise to imagine that we know the secret of the infinite universe. Anything may be true, even the reflections of Blanqui in the twilight of his life.

While he was in prison the movement which had been crushed with the Commune was showing some very faint signs of life. Liberal opinion in the middle classes was reviving and working-class Socialism was sheltering behind it. An agitation had sprung up for the release of the Communards, and particularly of their great leader. In 1879 Blanqui was put up by a Committee as candidate for Bordeaux and elected to the Chamber.

His election was declared invalid: nevertheless the excitement was such that the President of the Republic found it expedient to pardon him and free him on June 10th, 1879. He was then taken down to Bordeaux to fight another election to retain his seat. Supporting him were both the Socialist working men whom he knew and the middle-class Republicans whom he had learned to hate during the siege of Paris. Presently it was noticed that Blanqui was uneasy under this double patronage. Then at one meeting he was asked his opinion of Grévy, then the idol of the middle-class Liberals. He answered sharply: "Grévy is a scoundrel."

That did it. The alliance was split in half. Blanqui lost his seat, but he kept his freedom, and did not allow sentiment about his old age and past services to be exploited by political adventurers. For the next year he devoted himself to propaganda, through his journal *No God nor Master*, and through the public meetings which he still had the strength to address. He was greeted everywhere with immense enthusiasm and signs of real affection.

He lived in narrow apartments in Paris with his faithful friend Granger, speaking regularly and working as hard as ever. In the last fortnight in December 1880 he spoke at as many as four

meetings—on the 12th with Louise Michel; on the 17th at the Rivoli Hall, where he seemed very tired; on the 24th at the Arnold Hall; on the 27th at Grenelle. From the last he returned late, at two in the morning, having found a cab with difficulty. He entered the room where Granger was, sat down and began to talk about the meeting. Then he rose quickly and said something incoherent. Granger looked up, but before he could move Blanqui fell helpless on the floor. His friend picked up the light form and carried him into the bedroom. The doctor, when he came, said it was a fit. There was no hope.

He lingered on for a few days and died, without recovering consciousness, on New Year's Day.

ii

It is largely because most of Blanqui's papers were burnt, and because of the active part that he took in French revolutionary history, that he has been forgotten as a thinker. Because he did not flood the market with pamphlets and reprinted speeches, nor produce a large volume on economics from a quiet study, his followers only remembered the words that he used during the fight, the sharp phrases in which he rallied the weak, and crystallised the aims and feelings of the rebels. The French speak of him only as *le vieux*—"the old man"; and it is not so long since the *Humanité*, in publishing some of his letters, thought it necessary to warn readers that "we have progressed a great way since these were written." Blanqui has become a half-mystical heroic figure, like Danton. Like Danton, he must stand forever in a heroic attitude and forever be crying, "*De l'audace, de l'audace, et encore de l'audace!*" Take some of the aphorisms by which he is still known:

"A rich man dead is a hole stopped. All gain, no loss."

"The poor are a necessity of the rich."

"Forty-eight hours are enough to make a revolution."

"Thrift is a pest."

"Great men should always be on their knees or their heads will stand out above the crowd."

"Communism and Proudhonism stand by a river bank quarrelling whether the field on the other side is maize or wheat. Let us cross and see."

These are interesting enough maxims, and from them a careful reader might perhaps guess something of Blanqui's policy and character. But a man who is remembered by such sayings is not remembered as a leader and thinker. The world remembers Danton's cry to the Assembly, it remembers Camille Desmoulins calling to the crowd in the gardens of the Palais Royal. But it does not turn to Danton's speeches for political instruction or re-read the *Vieux Cordelier* before calling a strike.

There was more in Blanqui's teaching than a few *bons mots*. He was the first to formulate and act upon the theory of proletarian dictatorship, for example. His formulation of revolutionary tactics has been largely justified by events, and to it and to its application by his followers in the Commune of Paris the Russian Communists owe much, more indeed than they knew.

Blanqui's published theoretical work is almost exclusively to be found in the two small volumes of his *Critique Sociale*, printed after his death. This consists, as to one-third, of a portion of a book on economics and an outline of his own programme. The rest consists of disconnected remarks on various subjects, some of which are extremely valuable, while some were hardly worth reprinting. None of it can be regarded as his finished work, even to the extent that the third volume of *Capital* is Marx's. Most of it has not passed beyond the stage of notes.

Let us, however, examine, even in its imperfect state, the "Prologue" to his *Critique*. This states what he imagined to be the economic basis of his programme. The fundamental basis of exchange, he argues, is, according to all the political economists, the *equivalence of the exchanged values*. Overreaching is possible in individual cases, but neither a social system nor a theory of society can be based on overreaching. But this fundamental of economic life is denied every day by the principle of *interest*, which lies at the root of all capital. Instead of value A exchanging for value A, value A becomes, through interest and without any productive exertion by its owner, value A plus B. The £100 lent returns as £110 and £10 has been exchanged for nothing. This has upset the whole process of exchange. This retention of values in passing, by the capitalist, holds up the normal process of exchange. Certain products which would be bought normally

are not bought, through the potential buyer being robbed of £10. This leads to distress among the sellers—the producers—who are soon completely at the mercy of the capitalist. This point Blanqui enforces by a dialogue between Lazarus, the poor man, and Gobseck, the wealthy, and from that goes on to a rhetorical attack upon the destructive power of wealth. Blanqui never could forget that he was a man of action, and such propaganda writing occupies an undue space in the already too small book.

No one who has ever read any Marx will have gone thus far without protest. What is this strange, antiquated stuff—this "political economy" in which producers are the same as sellers and the basic principle of society is the equivalence of exchange? It must be conceded at once that the greatness of Blanqui does not lie in his economics, though these must be understood to understand his political philosophy. Nevertheless, a comparison with Marx is unfair. Behind Marx were Ricardo, Hodgskin and the whole line of writers who made respectable the school of British economists. Behind Blanqui were only J. B. Say and Frederic Bastiat. There is no reason to believe that he was even aware of the existence of any of the works of Marx—possibly not even of Marx's own existence. He is occupied here in doing to Bastiat and Say what Marx also did to Ricardo—turning the theories of the economists against themselves and showing their damning effect upon the class they were brought forward to defend.

It is also to be observed that Blanqui is writing in the France of the Second Empire, not even in London of the same date. That means that he has before him a society in which the sellers still commonly are the producers, in which the one-man establishment is far from extinct, and capitalists do rise from the ranks by mean scraping and saving.

Blanqui proceeds to develop his conception by asking, "What is Capital?" He enumerates the various definitions current at the day ("the sum of products being consumed," "current consumption or current exchange," "accumulated products," "accumulated labour") and attacks them, ruling out of the question all real property, such as buildings and factories, as being immovables (*immeubles*) and consequently not really capital, which is fluid. It is impossible to reproduce here his

detailed refutation of them, but it is important to observe the phrase in which he restates his view of the nature and origin of capital: "Labour stolen and held back (*supprimé*)." Capital consists only of money held back from circulation and is thus a *prevention* of labour. Hence it is that waste is better than thrift in the wealthy.

We must pass over his comments upon this waste. Excellent though these may be, they are clearly nothing but a summary of propaganda speeches which he had delivered from time to time and which are now the common property of every competent Socialist speaker. He passes on to a consideration of the orthodox French economists, of whose works he had an extensive knowledge, such as Bastiat and J. B. Say. Malthus he includes as of a similar school. His object is to turn their own theories against themselves, and very competently he does it. But what we wish to note here is the *class basis* of his comments. For example (p. 121) he points out how Bastiat continually holds up for praise the foreman and subcontractor. The reason is that in these persons the wealthy class, for whom Bastiat writes, see the germs of a new exploiter. Again, he points out that the defence of interest dates only from 1830. Previously, its justice had been assumed. But with the assumption of political power by the bourgeoisie followed the natural consequence of a need to defend the basis of its power against the previously submerged and undifferentiated exploited class.

In considering this material we must wipe out of our minds all memory of the *Communist Manifesto*, the materialist conception of history, or any Marxian economics. These did not exist or were not known in France at the time at which Blanqui wrote (between 1860 and 1870). The task of Blanqui and his greatest historical achievement was the awakening of the French workers to partial class-consciousness and the alignment of them against the bourgeoisie, "liberal" though it may be, as their real enemy. It appears that he was the first to formulate as a programme "*to disarm the bourgeoisie and arm the proletariat.*" In doing this work of awakening the French workers (without which there would have been no Paris Commune) Blanqui used the materials which were to his hand, and spoke, thought and wrote in the terms of the social system of his day. This was a predominantly "petty-bourgeois" capitalism—an aggregation

of small employers headed by a comparatively few financial magnates, not a complex system of vast industrial enterprises. We find, therefore, that the philosophical idealism which has its political heyday in such a society—think of Mazzini, Blanc and Kossuth—has a strong influence upon Blanqui. Marxist materialism could not possibly have had any wide influence on France at that date. By his own theories the Marxist is forbidden to expect historical materialism to be found in France during the Second Empire, and to despise Blanqui for that reason is absurd.

We find Blanqui, for example, using as an attack against Bastiat his repetition of the old story that workers can rise from the ranks by thrift and virtue. By Bastiat (he says) it is thus argued that the great majority of men are wicked because they are not exploiters. We argue that the great majority of men are good and only the few exploiters wicked. Therefore we must be right. A purely idealist argument. Or again, take this complaint (*Critique Sociale*, i. 136):

"The economist considers what is, not what could or should be. For him the words 'justice,' 'iniquity,' have no meaning. Fact is all and right nothing."

This attitude was, of course, inevitable in one who was directly connected in thought with the great French Revolution.

To continue our analysis. Capital is money retained in the course of exchange. This can be observed in all the definitions offered by the economists (*Critique*, i. 154). Cutting out great quantities of obsolete matter we come to his most important deduction: "Without this retention of money the exchange of products would proceed at par without intermission, without these alterations of dead and live seasons, idleness and recovery, which bring into the social atmosphere the periodic tempests of nature. . . . Credit stimulates production without being able to stimulate consumption to the same degree, because of the capitalist tithe which prevents the workers buying back the equivalent of their products. Hence necessarily growing plethora and, as a consequence, a general crisis every five or six years"; (*Critique*, i. 133; ii. 26).

"Capitalism has grasped the possibilities of association; it is using it for the purpose of exterminating small and middling industry and small and middling commerce. . . . But it is the

privilege of this glorious principle not to be able to do anything but good. It is the Keating's Powder of capital and the bugs that eat it will die of the poison."

Here is a great lacuna in his philosophy. This subject was to have been treated "in all its length" later; it was not, or the passage has not survived. We find him next making certain prefatory observations, before discussing his programme, on the history of Communism:

"Alleged Communism of primitive man—an absurdity. —Quite the contrary; Individualism at its highest point.—The non-division of land is a ridiculous argument. Why divide what is not cultivated? It is like calling the existing nations Communist because they do not divide the sea into private estates" (*Critique*, ii. 73).

He traces, in various places and to his own satisfaction, the proof that the exact inverse is true, and that from the Stone Age the only advances made by man have been made from Individualism to Communism and not vice versa. For example (*Critique*, ii. 68):

"It is false to say that Communism was ever the infancy of any society and that it marks the lowest degree in the ladder of society. Such assertions are the direct opposites of truth. All history controverts them. Neither the Essenes nor the Moravian Brethren formed a nation any more than the Greek or Roman converts. . . . In all countries and at all times Individualism was the first form of society. Its reign is that of ignorance and savagery. It is improved by the passing of ages and this improvement is always a diminution of its principle. All social progress consists of Communist innovations. Communism is only the final term of association."

How, then, are we to take the final step to Communism? Association and mutual assistance are both leading us towards Communism, but we are up against an apparently impassable barrier—popular ignorance, fostered in France and caused by the priests, whose organisations will be one of the first to be destroyed after the revolution. How can we overcome this ignorance? By the organisation now of education, perhaps? But both the priests and the lay teachers are against us.

"And we cannot even count on the Press. The opposition Press scarcely passes the city walls. The countryside belongs to

retrograde sheets, which support by their printed propaganda the verbal propaganda of the priests, the *frères ignorantins* and the big proprietors. All is against us, nothing for us.

"What is left us? The breath of progress in the air, the contact of man with man by the railways, public conscience, above all, the sight of our enemies, our best argument. What is growing perhaps is anger, a precarious force. To-day's anger is often to-morrow's fear. No solid base but education (*instruction*), and that is paralysed by our enemies. We are marking time.

"But on the morrow of a revolution a change of scene. Not, indeed, a sudden transformation. Men and things are the same as the day before. Only Hope and Fear have changed sides. Chains have fallen; the nation is free, and a vast horizon opens before it.

"What shall be done then? Fasten a fresh relay to the same chariot as in 1848, and tranquilly resume the same route? We know where it leads. If, on the other hand, good sense at last has its way, here are two parallel roads running side by side. One leads by stages to universal full instruction; the other by corresponding stages to Communism.

"On both roads the first step is the same—destruction of obstacles. They are well known. Here the black army[1]; there the conspiracy of capital. The black army can be turned out of country: a simple job. But capital is less accommodating. Its invariable proceeding is to flee or hide itself. After that it sits at the window and watches calmly the people standing in the gutter. That is the history of '48. The people groaned, wept, cursed and, angered too late, were well beaten and resumed their chains. Don't let's start again!

"Stop the disappearance of money? Impossible! It cannot even be thought of. But real property, even personal property (*les immeubles, voire les meubles*), cannot flee or be hidden. They'll do. The first to our hand in a hurry. . . .

"STEPS TO BE TAKEN AT THE MOMENT: *Economic*: (1) Order to all heads of industry and commerce, under pain of expulsion from France, to maintain for the moment *in statu quo* their present establishments, personnel and salariat. The State will make arrangements with them. (2) Substitution of a public authority

[1] *I.e.* priests.

(*régie*) for any employer expelled for refusal. . . . (3) An assembly charged with laying the foundations of workers' associations.

"By the order to employers Capital's traitor thrust would be parried. That is the essential point at the first moment. Then the workers need not wait in the gutter for the new social measures."[1]

He goes on from this to discuss "political measures"; but before we go further with Blanqui's programme of what he would do with power when he had seized it, we must inquire further into how he proposed that the revolutionaries should seize that power. This fact of the seizure of power differentiates him from the reformist Socialist, who proposes to remodel, piece by piece, the existing state without an upheaval. For Blanqui, all Communist reconstruction is *post-revolutionary*; ante-revolutionary action of that kind he does not even mention. And the method of this revolution?

It is what we should now call the dictatorship of the proletariat, of which Blanqui (not Marx) was the first formulator and public advocate,[2] as he appears to have been also of the phrase "arming the proletariat and disarming the bourgeoisie."

[1] Quoted from my *Revolution from* 1789 *to* 1906. Document 102.

[2] I make this claim with hesitation and subject to correction. The best-known formulation of the dictatorship of the proletariat by Marx is in the *Letter on the Gotha Programme*, written in 1875 but not published till much later. Blanqui's advocacy is to be dated in the eighteen sixties. Earlier references (I have not searched the correspondence for private statements) by Marx are in (1) a letter to Weydemeyer in America, 1852 (quoted in Max Beer's *Marx*, p. 85): "The class struggle leads necessarily to the dictatorship of the proletariat." But this was in a private letter and not published until many, many years later. (2) In the *Klassenkampf in Frankreich*, according to a translation by Eden and Cedar Paul (*Creative Revolution*, p. 139—I have not the original), Marx stated in 1850 that the French workers in "1848 to 1850" (June 1848?) demanded "the dictatorship of the working class." In so doing he must be presumed to give to the cry a sort of quasi-approval, but this is a very different matter from making it an immediate and public demand and acting upon it in a revolutionary manner, as Blanqui did.

The claim made by the Pauls in the same passage for "dictatorship" in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847 is not tenable. The power of the proletariat is there definitely and explicitly stated to be exercised in democratic forms. The importance of the Communist Manifesto lies in its formulation of the *existence* of the class war and of class division: the magnitude of the change involved in this can be discovered by comparing the Manifesto with, say, the Declaration of Independence and Robespierre's Declaration of the Rights of Man. To attempt to force into the Manifesto the whole of the modern Communist programme is absurd and historically

Where he described this as the first duty of the revolution is uncertain. It is quoted as his in an *Histoire des Blanquistes* (Ch. Da Costa, 1912), between two other phrases which are easily traceable as his. But this author gives no authorities for his quotations, and I have not been able to trace it in the incomplete works of Blanqui which I have been able to search. Nevertheless, there is no reason to doubt Da Costa's good faith, nor can the words have been written much after 1870 (probably much earlier), in which case I imagine Blanqui's claim to have formulated first the most deadly point in the modern Bolshevik programme is established. The Blanquist method of revolution becomes apparent when we compare this famous phrase with the whole of his political life. The agent of revolution was not to be a "mass-party" in the phrase of to-day, but a strictly limited organisation drawn primarily, of course, from the workers, but allowing for other elements—the *déclassés*, bourgeois and professional men who had for some reason been thrust out of their own class.

"Some brain workers are worse off than the worst hand worker. Who are these *déclassés*, if not the pariahs of the intellectual world? They are insulted only because they are poor . . . thousands of fine minds are perishing in the dregs of misery. They are the horror and terror of Capital. Capital's hate is clear-sighted. These *déclassés*, the invisible weapon of progress, are to-day the secret ferment which makes the mass heave and prevents its falling lifeless and dying away. To-morrow they will be the reserve of the revolution" (*Critique*, i. 219).

Elsewhere he censures savagely "T" (Tolain) for a proposal to drive out all but manual workers from the International—a proposal, by the way, meant to expel Karl Marx. These remarks of Blanqui's, together with his Chauvinistic articles during the war of 1870, gave an excuse to some of his more prosperous followers to repudiate the class-war after his death.

monstrous. In none of Marx's works, moreover, does the dictatorship occupy a place of importance. His references to it are few and almost casual. Such a work as Lenin's *State and Revolution* was necessitated by that very fact.

We are thus reduced to the note in the *Gotha Programme* for Marx's first public formulation of the dictatorship, and even the 1872 Manifesto of the Blanquists (quoted later) antedates that. Marx's great work was the analysis of the class war; the advocacy of the dictatorship was Blanqui's.

That there was no justification for this is shown not merely by his hostility to Capital in his writings and his advocacy of social revolution, but in the constitution of his revolutionary societies, in which the majority of the members always came from the working class.

The revolutionary party upon which Blanqui relied never exceeded three thousand members. Nor, indeed, is it probable that Blanqui would have permitted it to do so. Each member of this organisation had to be personally vouched for, and it thus could not be a mass organisation of heterogeneous elements. The members were not chosen because they were the workers and students closest in agreement with Blanqui. Indeed, many of his closest adherents in theory, such as Ranc, were to be found among the "Blanquists of the second rank," as they were called—those of his followers who were not considered reliable enough to be members of the organisation but were called upon occasionally for work of a special character. On the contrary, the party proper, consisting of "Blanquists of the first rank," was made up of men selected for their revolutionary ability and decision. Blanqui was most tolerant of doctrinal differences if these were compensated by a steady hand and quick aim. His army was a picked corps of the best and best-trusted members of the Paris working class.

This Republican army—it was that more than a party—would occupy its peace-time leisures in propagating hatred of the Government and of the capitalist. It would seize and make use of any existing popular discontent (such as the murder of Victor Noir by Prince Pierre Bonaparte) in order to work the people up to the point of armed insurrection against the Government. It was consciously regarded as a picked and disciplined body, one or two units of which should be sufficient in each section of any movement to "keep it straight."

It did *not*, however (and here we note its main difference from a modern Communist Party), attempt to gain for itself any permanent position of authority in the static organs of working-class expression—such as are to-day the Unions or the Co-operatives. At that time there were only three organs of working-class expression which the Blanquists might have so used: the Co-operatives, the Unions and the French section of the International, which included a very large number of the unions. All of these were

very weak institutions—when judged by our modern standards—and showed no such signs of permanence, as do the British Trade Unions, for example. The first, the co-operative movement, was still very small in size and completely dominated by the theories of Proudhon, who at one time in his career decided that the millennium would come through co-operative productive societies exchanging their products at their real value. This was called *mutualism*, and was advocated by the Proudhonists at the congresses of the International.

Blanqui never contemplated gaining influence in the co-operative movement. Firstly, it was the preserve of a rival theorist for whom he had little respect; secondly, it could have no share in the revolution as he conceived it. He inclined himself so far as to point out, in the phrase quoted at the beginning of this section, that the differences between his followers ("the Communists," as he called them) and the Proudhonists could be settled *ambulando* after the revolution, but that this task—the revolution—was first. For his real attitude we may read a note left behind at his death:

"Letter of a Lyonnese, L., who feels strongly the fundamental vice of co-operation although he preaches it. He understands that individual egoism is at the bottom of the system and he protests against the immorality of dividends (profits). But it would be easier to stop water running than to stop a man working for himself from aiming at profits. Mutualism is an empty word."[1]

It was after more hesitation that he severed himself from the International and the French Trade Unions. There is even a fully written-out speech (*Critique*, ii. 143) which he intended at one time, it would appear, to deliver at the 1867 Congress of the International. It is a fairly astute popularisation of his main views on economics. In the end, however, he definitely decided against taking any part in the organisation. He had always forbidden his followers to enter it. In 1866 he had at first permitted them to go to the Geneva Congress to denounce the French delegates, but had then withdrawn his permission. His aloofness was due very largely to the character of the French International leaders, who were ambitious skilled workers, protected by a member of Napoleon's family and complete enemies

[1] *Critique*, ii. 135.

of any revolutionary point of view. The unions which they led were not large in membership, had no long history and were not yet firmly rooted in the French proletariat. The traditional method of the French was not organisation for industrial action, but organisation for insurrection, and it was for this that Blanqui was working. For a Commune, not for a Trades Union Congress.

This picked body of disciplined men could, when backed by the workers, smash a government and install itself. And then?

First of all Blanqui clears out of the way the Utopian Socialists —Cabet, Fourier and Saint-Simon, and all the others whose schemes were current. For them Socialism was a mode of life to be inaugurated in little communities, specially set up, whose example would convert the world. This way of thinking had a very great vogue in French and English working-class circles, and occasional devotees of "Communal Socialism" appear even now. One of Blanqui's main theoretic achievements is the killing of this form of Socialism stone dead. For once we are surrounded by a wealth of possible quotation: we will give but two:

"Is it possible to build, now and straight away, an edifice from which Capital shall be entirely excluded? Have we the plan, the materials and all the elements of this precious house? The sectaries say Yes, the revolutionaries No, and the revolutionaries are the only real socialists, for they are far better guardians of the future, which belongs to Socialism. . . . Let the revolutionary government stamp on revealed religion as a born people-murderer. A first police duty. Without this sanitation nothing can be done. Let the material oppressors, officials and capitalists be swept away in one case and in the other placed under a pitiless surveillance. Second duty. So far the way is simple. But for a government to spend its time in creating *a priori*, in imposing by order from its sure knowledge, an imaginary social organism—no, a thousand times no!"[1]

Or again, there is this passage[2]:

"Already there are more than one Moses who swear that they have built in time and cement for eternity, and for sure the gate

[1] *Critique*, ii. 113.
[2] Quoted in my *Revolution*, p. 218.

of hell will never prevail against these new sale-price heavens. Any believer is free to search through the darkness for a fugitive glimpse of the monument of the future. It is a very good object for a walk and an excellent exercise for the eyes. But to come back from your excursion with a complete and minute design of the building, plan, section, height, details and authentic site — no, my friend, no; put your drawing back in your pocket. . . .

"The study of the past and the present shows that all progress is a step made in this direction (the direction of Communism), and the examination of the problems discussed to-day allows us to find no other reasonable solution. Everything is moving rapidly to this end; it only needs public education—that is, only our goodwill. Hence Communism is not a Utopia. It is a normal development, and has no relation to the three or four systems that have sprung all-armed from certain fantastical brains. Cabet in his *Icarie* and his attempt at Nauvoo made precisely this mistake of assimilating the real ideal of the future to the floating hypotheses of the purveyors of reach-me-downs. He was doomed to a heavier fall than his rivals, since Communism is the result of general evolution and is not an egg hatched in a corner of the human race, by a bird with two legs, no wings and no feathers."

Discussing the old objection: "Who will do the dirty work under Socialism?" he made very clear his infinitely more realist attitude to the question of post-revolutionary policy. His reply to the question was: "That is neither your business nor mine. . . . To-morrow does not belong to us." Under Socialism there will be fifty millions of men, and you tell me they will be incompetent to settle that question. Perhaps they will also put their food in their ears, unless we leave instructions that food must be eaten through the mouth![1] His programme, consequently, excluded the immediate establishment of Communism. A revolutionary government was to be established whose aim

[1] His discussion of this is a good type of his more lively polemic. The question was put to French Socialists in the cruder form: "Qui videra le pot de chambre?" He replies (*Critique*, i. 193): "C'est une chose rejouissante quand on discute communisme, comme les terreurs de l'adversaire le portent d'instinct sur ce meuble fatal! 'Qui videra mon pot de chambre?' veut-il dire au fond. Mais il est trop avisé pour user du pronom possessif et consacre ses alarmes a la postérité."

was to be to turn the whole current of economic development towards Communism, and not to ordain a new scheme of society.

This government would be based on the dictatorship of the revolutionary workers of Paris—Paris, because in Blanqui's days that was the sole home of the French revolutionary worker. Outside a few large towns the provinces contained only reactionaries and peasants.

"A recourse to a vote on the day after the revolution could have but two equally criminal motives: to carry the vote by force or to bring back the monarchy. This will be called an admission that we are but a violent minority. No! the majority won by terror, and the gag is not a majority of citizens but a herd of slaves. It is a blind tribunal which has heard but one of the two parties for seventy[1] years. Its duty to itself is to hear the other party for the next seventy. Since they cannot plead together they shall plead one after the other. . . . One year of Parisian dictatorship in '48 would have spared France and history the quarter of a century now ending. If ten years are needed this time, there must be no hesitation. . . .

"It is necessary for the safety of the revolution to unite prudence with energy. An attack on the principle of property would be as dangerous as useless. So far from being imposed by decrees, Communism cannot succeed except by the free resolution of the country, and this resolution can only come from the general spread of enlightenment."

He explains further that with all the forces of the Government turned to revolutionary education during the dictatorship period, and the industrial capitalists completely shackled, the substitution of worker-controlled associations may soon "take place with extreme rapidity."

For the countryside, however, although we must not be afraid to say the word "Communism," we can expect no rapid progress. The comparative solidity of the peasant's economic basis prevents him being driven towards Communism. "It must be definitely declared that no one will be forced to join his field into an association; that all this will be voluntary." The Government once installed, by force of propaganda and example,

[1] 1799-1869.

will coax and push the peasants into co-operative culture. No more.

Hard words the French Socialists found these. But we to-day know them to be true. The great and tedious difficulties met after victory by the Soviet régime have underlined heavily the truth of every word that Blanqui wrote. Communism can *not* be imposed by decree. It *can* only come by revolutionary education. ("Ignorance and Communism are incompatible." This lesson is enforced on nearly every page of the *Critique*. How many members of the Russian Communist Party could support it from their own experience?) The peasant *must* be left his land, and must not be driven into an association.

But before 1917 the Socialists would have nothing of all this. The unflagging self-deceivers who spoke at International Congresses would have none of Blanqui. A "Communist" who would not even pledge himself to the complete "nationalisation of all the means of production and exchange"! "We have progressed a great way since the days of Blanqui," charitably explained M. Jean Longuet, grandson of Karl Marx. Progressed indeed: the Socialist Congresses before the war would take none of these half-way Blanqui programmes; they would have the moon, the whole moon and nothing but the moon. As one turns over the pages of endless congresses, and notes the vast demands and little strength behind them, it is difficult to feel anything but contempt for the "Marxists" who despised Blanqui for his good sense. The orators of the Second International refusing to hear of the gradual introduction of Communism! There was no reality in their words: the disputes on compromise were often only quarrels between the advocates of the whole moon and those of the half moon. So they went gaily on till the war came and ended the disputes and silenced the disputers.

iii

The independent history of the Blanquist Party begins with the fall of the Paris Commune. The long imprisonment of Blanqui, and his release so short a while before his death and in so exhausted a condition, prevented him becoming ever again its old vigorous leader. Almost immediately after the Commune's fall and the scattering of the Blanquists, questions of policy arose

which demanded immediate settlement one way or the other. Some substitute for Blanqui had to be found. Emile Eudes, a general of the Commune, was almost unanimously chosen by the refugees in London.[1] Most of the distinguished followers of Blanqui were either dead, as were Ferré, Genton, Duval and Raoul Rigault, or banished to the convict settlement of New Caledonia, or scattered in Switzerland, or elsewhere across Europe. There was no rival to Eudes, who was generally liked and known to be devoted to the revolution.

The first question concerned their relations with the International. They had previously despised it, but the "Internationals" had fought with them behind the same barricades and sat with them on the same benches of the Commune. Aloofness was not to be continued. When the disheartened and poverty-stricken refugees reached London they were generously and warmly welcomed by Marx, and their most distinguished members given seats on the General Council of the International as the true representatives of the French workers. They agreed to this, not merely because of their admiration for the *Civil War in France*, the manifesto in which the General Council had defended and supported the Commune, but because they saw a chance of turning the International into an organised instrument of revolution. "The International," they wrote, "should have been the permanent organisation of proletarian insurrection." Unfortunately the directors of the International were occupied with far other thoughts. All the strength of the active members was concentrated on the struggle between Marx and Bakunin. The storm burst at The Hague Congress in 1872, and the bitter personal quarrels, the furious doctrinal arguments which ended in the expulsion of Bakunin and the transference of the General Council to New York, split the International and wrecked it as a fighting force. The Blanquists, not unnaturally scandalised, withdrew, and with them most of the ex-Communards.

In a remarkable document,[2] not easily now available, they defended their withdrawal and restated their position in a manner

[1] Levraud and Regnard, two lesser known Blanquists, objected, and took no further part in the movement.

[2] *Internationale et Revolution, à propos de la Congres de la Haye*, par des refugiés de la Commune, London, 1872. I possess a copy but I know of no other.

which showed they had at least learnt something from the Commune :

" The Congress was beneath anything that can be imagined. Personal quarrels, doctrinal quarrels, intrigues and such occupied over half the sessions. One felt in the presence of a shadow to which public credulity alone lent life. The International was thought strong because it was believed to represent the revolution. It showed itself timid, divided, parliamentary. . . . As for the declarations and resolutions which we demanded on the organisation of the revolutionary forces of the proletariat, they were buried by referring them to a Commission."

In the same pamphlet they restated admirably the Blanquist position, elaborated undoubtedly by their meetings with Karl Marx, but essentially the same :

" For us, the International was neither a union of trade unions nor a federation of trade societies. It should have been the international vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat. We recognised the utility of these vast workers' associations organising revolt upon the economic field, and time and again breaking by their unity, by the strike, the stifling circle of oppression. We recognised the indissoluble unity of proletarian revolutionary activity in its double character (economic and political) too well to fall into the error of our adversaries and to deny one side on the pretext of stressing the other. We knew that it was by economic struggles that the proletariat began to organise, by them that it began to be conscious of itself as a class and a power, by them finally that were created the conditions that permit it, formed into a proletarian party, to accept battle on all fields—a struggle without mercy or truce, which will only end when by the conquest of political power and by its own dictatorship the proletariat has broken the old society and created the elements of the new.

" In formulating this truth, axiomatic since the 18th March " [1871, date of the Communard uprising], " that the forcible conquest of political power was for the proletariat a necessity for the realisation of the Social Revolution we did not expect anyone to misunderstand us. We do not know how much good faith there is in what we still desire to call the mistake of our opponents. We believe that Socialists cannot doubt that when the privileges and classes disappear which have produced what

is called the State or Government, and whose modifications are shown by corresponding changes in these institutions (which are both products of these privileges and class distinctions, and guarantees of their maintenance), then these institutions will of themselves disappear because their social functions will no longer exist. Governmental functions will resolve themselves into administrative functions in the equalitarian atmosphere of the new society. There will no more be a state than there will be classes.

"But for the realisation of this emancipation of the workers, this abolition of the classes, aim of the social revolution, it is necessary that the bourgeoisie be deprived of its political privilege by which it maintains all its others. It is necessary during a period of revolutionary dictatorship for the proletariat to employ for its freeing the power till then used against it, to turn against its adversary the very weapons that till then have held it down in oppression. And only then, when *tabula rasa* has been made of these institutions and privileges which make up present society, will this dictatorship of the proletariat cease as being without objective, the abolition of all classes carrying with it naturally the disappearance of class government. Then groups like individuals will be autonomous, then will be realised that federation, result and not means of victory, that *anarchy* which victory will produce and which during the struggle is failure and disorganisation where it is not imbecility or treason." [1]

We must remember that these words, including the now famous phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat," were written fifty years ago—1872. We are too apt to attribute all of the modern revolutionary movement to one great man—Marx—and not to realise its complex origins and the great part played in it by such little-known thinkers and workers as the Blanquist members of the Commune.

But clear-sightedness and fine programmes do not by themselves make revolutions. The Blanquists, recovering from their defeat, formed themselves once more into a disciplined group, called *The Revolutionary Commune* (La Commune Révolutionnaire), and succeeded in linking up with groups in Paris and in

[1] Signed: Ant. Arnaud, F. Cournet, Margueritte, Constant Martin, G. Ranvier, E. Vaillant, Ex-members of the General Council of the International.

most large French towns. But it was uphill, slow work. The Versaillese massacres had not been vain, and there was very little result to be shown when in 1879 Blanqui was set free.

The amnesty of 1880 brought over most of the *Commune Révolutionnaire* to Paris again to work under Blanqui, who, now a very old man of seventy-six, turned his and his followers' attention to written and spoken propaganda, rather than to armed insurrection, for which indeed the conditions were most unfavourable.

After his death in 1881, his immediate followers organised the *Central Revolutionary Committee.* Originally this was strictly limited to the Blanquists, but the influence of Vaillant and the necessity for general political agitation before long caused it to become as open to the general public as any other political party and to lose the disciplined semi-military traditions of Blanquism. Soon after, Eudes being dead, dissension broke out between a section favouring support of the militarist General Boulanger (with the intention of turning the agitation into a revolutionary movement) and a section opposed to him. In 1889 the sections split and the latter, headed by Vaillant, survived. It became more and more of a general political Socialist propaganda organisation, contesting Parliamentary elections. We note in 1895 the name of Marcel Sembat among its members. In 1898 it changed its name, to the "Socialist Revolutionary Party." By this time hardly any of Blanqui's methods and aims were to be recognised in the Party, and when in 1904-1905 it joined the new "Unified" French Socialist Party, the last trace of Blanquist organisation had vanished. We can learn how little of Blanqui's spirit remained in some of his followers from the following quotation written in 1914 by Albert Goullé, nominally a strong adherent :—

"The sullen formula of the class struggle has been invented by the continuators of Karl Marx. Above all, after the return from the battlefields the brothers-in-arms must remain brothers. Let us quickly throw away among the used and dirty rubbish the 'class struggle' which German agents propagate among us."

Blanqui had been Chauvinistic in 1870, but he could never have written that.

. . . . . .

The dissolution of Blanqui's personal army of followers by no

means carried with it the disappearance of his ideas. His revolutionary tactics of forming a disciplined and limited revolutionary army have again and again recommended themselves to revolutionary workers in recent days. There are many to-day who would prefer as a policy to neglect or ignore the various twists of current politics, to ignore the Trade Unions, Co-operatives and Labour Parties, and confine their energies to the building up of a secret revolutionary army to strike when occasion dictated it. This policy has sometimes claimed the name of Communism for itself. Take, for example, this quotation from *Communism*, a pamphlet by Eden and Cedar Paul, two members of the Communist Party of Great Britain:

"'The dictatorship of the proletariat,' wrote Lenin in the summer of 1917, 'is the organisation of the advance guard of the oppressed as the ruling class, for the purpose of crushing the oppressors.' The word 'advance guard' must be noted. The dictatorship will not be exercised here, any more than it has been exercised in Russia, by the masses. It will be exercised by an oligarchy, by a revolutionary *élite*. The larger the number of this class-conscious proletarian *élite* the better. But from the very nature of the system in which the revolutionary change has to be effected, it is impossible to expect that, prior to the revolution, the majority even of those who are proletarian by status can be made to grasp the real meaning of capitalism imperialism, and to voice an imperative and effective demand for its overthrow."

The quotation from Lenin is undoubtedly misused; he has not been, nor is he now, opposed to mass parties. Nevertheless, here we have clearly advocated the formation of a small picked party, as opposed to the "mass party" ideal. This conception has been more than once urged at modern revolutionary Congresses. Had we been present, for example, at the Third Congress (1921) of the Communist International and the Congress of the "Red Trade Union International" which followed it, we could have seen clearly three main currents of opinion. If we allowed our fantasy to trace these currents in each case to one particular political thinker, we should have, of course, admitted that Karl Marx was the predominating influence. The Russian Communist Party and the vast majority of the other delegates in fact and in profession were adherents of his teaching. But

we should also have found a smaller group of syndicalists, both the French and the famous American I.W.W. These, with their distrust for politics, we might have traced to Sorel, or more justly to P. J. Proudhon. But we should have found yet another group much smaller, but treated with the greatest gentleness and consideration. There were delegates from all countries who in outlook really belonged to this group, but the only large mass of them were to be found in the ranks of the Communist Labour Party of Germany (K.A.P.D.). This group demanded the ignoring of the existing organs of working-class expression and presented a firm front against the proposed mass parties, favouring picked small parties. They were, in short, Blanquists. They inherited this point of view from the old *Spartakusbund* of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg. The *Spartakusbund* had organised exactly in the manner of Blanqui. Some of its members had recognised and avowed their obligations to him: "Blanquism" was actually revived as its name in Germany. They organised for a Blanquist assault on the reactionary authorities; they struck and failed in 1919. But though they smashed their organisation then, the policy they pursued has left deep marks on the German Communist Party as well as on the sectarian K.A.P.D.[1] For a long time—indeed, even now, for the Blanquists are by no means excluded from the Third International yet—the German Party was obsessed by Putschismus—an exclusive preoccupation with organising surprise armed atacks upon the ruling classes, violent uprisings like the "March-action" of 1921, in which Max Holz was captured.

Again, we might have found the same idea of organising only the *élite* of the revolution in the British Socialist Labour Party in its prime—in the days of the war when Mr Lloyd George would not visit Glasgow for fear of the Clyde revolutionaries. That organisation had at one time a most surprising grip upon the most essential war-time industry—engineering; and the fears of revolution which were inspired by its actions were not utterly unfounded. But the figures of the membership were astoundingly small. They seem insignificant, but every man counted for one. Not only was the membership trifling (much more trifling than is

[1] There are two parties in Germany claiming to be Communist Parties: the official United Communist Party (U.K.P.D.), say, 300,000 members, and the small Communist Labour Party (K.A.P.D.), say, 35,000 members.

generally realised) and the discipline rigid, but there was little desire to increase the size of the Party. New members were not welcomed; candidates were most often met with the reply: "You attend some classes first. Then, maybe, we'll see."

The exact reverse is the present policy of the Communist International and all its affiliated bodies. If we read, say, the Thesis of the Second Congress, entitled "Fundamental Tasks," or the first half of the Thesis of the Third Congress, entitled "On Tactics," we shall find that the formation of mass parties is almost tediously insisted upon. Parties that contain five hundred thousand members, not five thousand. Parties that gain control of Trade Unions. Parties that are so widespread in the working-class movement that they cannot be uprooted without great masses of the working class being torn away with them.

It may be argued, theoretically, that there is little difference. The Communists organise in order that they may induce a majority of the proletariat to follow their lead and begin an armed revolution. The Blanquists do not care about having a majority so long as they have enough support to make the risk worth taking. Where, then, is the difference? For, in the case of the Communists, who is to be the judge of whether a majority of the workers is behind them? The Communists, of course. And since the Government will hardly wait for them to poll the workers, they will fall back upon the Blanquist method of merely seeing if in fact they have enough armed support to make the risk worth taking.

All this is very specious, but quite irrelevant. There is an immense cleavage in tactics and behaviour between the Communist and the Blanquist. The Blanquist limits his membership in all sorts of ways; he must see inside the head of every would-be member, not merely to know his opinions and loyalty to the working class, but his ability to face danger, his nerve and experience, and his handiness with a gun. The shelves of every Communist contain copies of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*: Mills' bombs would be a more treasured possession of every Blanquist. The Blanquist concentrates on the fight; he cares very little about leading strikes and fighting elections, in both of which the Communists are involved. Not, indeed, that a Communist Party would take "just anybody" as a member. It would be impossible, for example, for an habitual drunkard to retain a post

of responsibility in a party. And each party member has *some* work to do in the party; but, according to their own programme, there is room in the rank and file of a party for the maimed, the foolish and the timid, for the sinner if not for the publican. Communist parties accept the man who cannot shoot even a Cabinet Minister and who still runs down a Tube entrance every time a motor-lorry backfires. For the programme of the Communist International is to work up a vast movement of the working class, calling for every sort of talent and every kind of man, until the forces of revolution become irresistible. It is not to lurk hidden in the dark and strike suddenly at a Capitalist Society as the Carbonaro did at a crowned head. The two methods are irreconcilable.

We cannot fight out the battle between them here. Is, for example, the Blanquist method proper to an undeveloped proletariat, such as that in France before the Commune? If so, why does the mass-party theory come from Russia, while the other theory is found in Germany and Great Britain?

There is no answer and no reconciliation. Blanqui despised Marx's creation, the First International, while he was alive, and the spirits of the two men still struggle one against the other.

THE CHIEF OF POLICE OF THE PARIS COMMUNE

TH. FERRÉ

"I AM a Socialist—a Communist, and atheist! When I am the stronger, look out for yourselves!" A little dark man with a long nose, piercing black eyes under glasses, a huge black beard, black whiskers and black hair, so addressed the President of the Court trying, on July 19th, 1870, a charge of conspiracy to murder Napoleon III. The scandalised President ordered him to be removed back to the cells, but as there was no proof that he was connected with the plot in question, he was in the end released.

It was not the first time that Charles Theophile Ferré, then aged twenty-five and barely a year from his death, had come into conflict with the police. He had been sentenced before, and in 1869, along with his fellow-Blanquist, Raoul Rigault, had led a prisoners' revolt in Sainte-Pelagie.[1] He had long ago given up his post as a clerk and devoted himself to revolutionary propaganda. A follower of Blanqui, he was not considered to be one of the *élite* of that strictly limited party, and was not admitted to share in any of Blanqui's greater exploits. He was regarded only as an effective orator, not as a leader in any way. His appearance—he had been described as an excited cock-sparrow—was against him.

During the war of 1870, after the proclamation of the Republic, Ferré fought in the ranks of the National Guard, in the 152nd battalion of Montmartre. He had no striking share in the events of the 18th of March next year, although he was on the Montmartre Vigilance Committee, and first comes into notice when he was elected to the Commune by the 18th *arrondissement*, polling 13,784 votes. He did not take much part in the debates of that vacillating body, but with his fellow-Blanquists, Cournet and Raoul Rigault, organised the police. Rigault was first

[1] Details are lacking of his early life.

Delegate for Public Security, then—Cournet taking his place—Procureur of the Commune (Public Prosecutor), while Ferré was one of his deputies (substitutes).

The police service was one of the very few which was fairly competently carried on during the Commune.[1] Out of nothing whatever, in a few days Rigault and Ferré organised an efficient police service. The streets were orderly and decent; violent crime was practically unknown. The police were able to detect and suppress numerous Versaillese plots. The spies who swarmed into Paris from Versailles very quickly, if they were at all active, found their way into the hands of the "terrible procureur," Rigault—himself a young man of twenty-five—and of Ferré, who on May 14th took Cournet's place as Delegate for Public Security. The very dangerous "plot of the three-coloured armlets," which might have led to an insurrection of bourgeois National Guards within Paris, was scotched though not suppressed by them. The spies, who afterwards vaunted their deeds to the Versailles courts-martial, had either to invent entirely or attempt to claim credit for things which were pure accident.

Into Rigault and Ferré's hands also fell a terrible and deadly machine—the records of the Prefecture of Police, spy section, under Napoleon III. They were able to go through these records and identify the spies and traitors within their own ranks. The strangest, most heartrending discoveries sometimes resulted. Mazzini's own secretary, Major Wolff, was actually on Bonaparte's pay-roll—the same Wolff who had helped to found the International. It was as though we were to find to-day that Angelica Balabanova, Secretary of the Third International, was in the pay of Major-General Childs of Scotland Yard. And these spies had even found their way into the Communal Assembly itself.[2] Before he left the building Ferré burnt the whole foul accumulation of documents to ashes.

Finally, they were able to collect a large number of valuable hostages, including the Archbishop of Paris, Bonjean, President of the Haut Cour, and Jecker, instigator of Napoleon's Mexican invasion. The Commune succeeded for a while in checking the

[1] I wish to withdraw a remark made on p. 66 of my *Workers' International* which suggests that this service was incompetent. I was misled by Lissagaray (p. 224), a most prejudiced writer.

[2] As Emile Clement, Pindy (?), Blanchet-Pourille.

Versaillese murder of prisoners by threatening reprisals on these men.

When the Versaillese entered Paris, Rigault and Ferré fought bravely. Rigault was killed in a vain attempt to collect sufficient National Guards to make the Island of La Cité a fortified place to check the Versaillese advance. Ferré remained with what little resistance was organised, and more and more became, as the other members of the Commune hid their red sashes and crept away to hide from the responsibility they had assumed, the sole representative of revolutionary authority.

The remaining Communard defenders were pushed back day by day by the closing iron ring of troops. Behind this advancing wall the officers of the French Army were supervising the killing of prisoners. The organised, merciless and loathsome massacre of all Communard defenders and suspected persons was in full swing. The last defenders of the Commune, maddened by this brutality and by despair, demanded the execution of the hostages, as decreed by the Commune. Ferré and Delescluze had already vainly tried to save one innocent man, de Beaufort, seized and killed by the crowd as a spy.

The other members of the Commune were dead, or safely hiding. Ferré, one of the very few men with the courage to assume the necessary responsibility and not hide his cowardice, Girondin-like, behind the "uncontrollable fury of the mob," decided to carry out the decree. He saw to the shooting of the spy Veysset. He authorised the shooting of the Archbishop and others—the executions of La Roquette.

No one can but pity these murdered men. Many no doubt were guilty, but most were untried and many innocent. The Archbishop especially was an upright and saintly man.

But hard and terrible though this last act of much-provoked revenge was, it is difficult to condemn either Ferré or the maddened soldiers of the Commune. There has never been a Government which, under similar circumstances, would not have carried out its solemn threat. The Commune struck a last and heavy blow before it died. That blow was as justified as any that it had struck before.

. . . . . .

Ferré, along with other members of the Commune, appeared before the Third Court-Martial, presided over by Merlin, with

Gaveau as prosecutor, both brutal officers—the last a violent, ignorant man, whose protuberant eyes and red neck swelling over his collar gave a just impression of stupidity. He went mad later, and at this date had only just come out of one spell in an asylum.

In the Commune we find all the characters that we should find in a chance assembly of working men. It was a "scratch" assembly and reflected very truly the faults and virtues of the Paris workers. Collect together, haphazard, a number of workers to-day, and what should we find? We should expect to find one or two thorough bad lots, one or two foreigners, a number of chatterers, a mass of honest and mediocre men, and a very few first-rate fighters. Such was the Commune. There was Blanchet, a forger, in it; Pindy, an alleged spy; there was Frankel, a Hungarian; Pyat, a coward and boaster; there were innumerable talkers and many silent indistinguished men; and a few—very few—who were fit for their task.

They say that shepherds put a few goats in among their flock and that the presence of these prevents the imbecile sheep scattering when there is a midnight alarm of wolves. The Commune, when it came to judgment, behaved little better than a flock of sheep. But the goats—the few brave men who could have rallied the second-rate men—were dead. Delescluze and Raoul Rigault had been shot in the street warfare. Flourens and Duval had been murdered as prisoners outside the walls of Paris months ago. Varlin's battered and unrecognisable corpse was in some hastily dug trench round Paris. Ferré alone, with the aid of Trinquet, a shoemaker, had to rally this frightened mass.

Nothing that he could do would have saved the Commune's honour. At this trial the weak men broke and ran. Urbain, proposer of the decree on the hostages, said:

"I can only express my great regret for the proposal I made to the Commune, and the indignation I felt over the burnings and last crimes of the Commune."

Jourde, Delegate for Finance:

"I swear by my honour that I said to myself: 'If the Bank of France is touched, France is lost, but some funds must be handed over or the Faubourgs will march on us.'"

Regère, member of the Committee of Public Safety:

"I only came to meetings of the Commune about four in the afternoon and I left before the end. The Commune wasted time

in useless discussions and rushed through a lot of decrees at the end of meeting, when I was never there. And I affirm I never knew anything about the decree on hostages."

Champy:

"I thought the only thing to do . . . was to come to an arrangement with the Versailles Government."

Rastoul:

"M. le President, before answering, I should say that I protest with all my powers against the murders and crimes committed or planned during the bloody agony of the Commune. Neither closely nor distantly, directly or indirectly, will I accept any solidarity with the men who burnt Paris and shot hostages."

Lullier (first Communard General), in the same Court, boasted that he was in the pay of Versailles.

Courbet, the great artist, said that he had only voted for pulling down the Vendôme Column on æsthetic grounds, and fawningly repudiated any responsibility for the Commune's acts.

All the time Ferré was trying by example to inspire these men to rise to their duty and behave at least decently and courageously as the workers' representatives facing a victorious enemy. At the outset he informed the Court that he refused to plead. Throughout the trial, however, he intervened with any question or comment which enabled him to expose any meanness or dishonesty of the Government, or to emphasise again his opposition to the society which was condemning him. Merlin and Gaveau, president and prosecutor, had long ago abandoned any attempt at impartiality, and interrupted and impeded Ferré as much as they could. They excelled themselves at the closing session, when he attempted to read a statement.

He began: "The Republic was in danger after the conclusion of peace and the shameful capitulation of Paris. The men who had succeeded to an Empire that had collapsed in mud and blood . . ."

MERLIN. I cannot permit those words. It was your Government that fell like that.

FERRÉ. ". . . clung to power, and amid universal contempt prepared in the dark a *coup d'état*. They persisted in preventing Paris from electing a municipal council. . . ."

GAVEAU. That is not true.

MERLIN. You may go on, but the third time I shall stop you.

FERRÉ. "Honest and decent papers were suppressed. Patriots were condemned to death. . . ."

GAVEAU. The prisoner must not go on reading this. I demand the application of the law.

FERRÉ. "The Monarchists were preparing the partition of France. Finally on the night of 18th March they felt themselves ready. They attempted to disarm the National Guard and arrest Republicans wholesale. . . ."

MERLIN. Sit down. Your counsel shall speak.

Ferré's counsel secured for him permission to read the last sentences of his statement.

FERRÉ. "I am a member of the Commune and in the hands of its conquerors. They want my life. Let them take it. I will not save my life by cowardice. I have lived free, and I will die free. I wish to add one thing. Fortune is capricious, and I leave to the future care for my memory and my revenge."

MERLIN. The memory of a murderer.

A few more words passed and Ferré replied to Merlin: "I accept the fate that is coming to me."

A lawyer, his professional sense of honour outraged, protested that Merlin, a presumably impartial judge, had called Ferré a murderer. The fashionable audience howled at him, and when silence was restored Merlin answered him, smiling: "I agree that I made use of the term you mention. I take note of your remarks." [1]

The abjectness of the others saved their lives, except for Lullier, who knew too much of the spying that had gone on, and had imprudently dragged in high-placed names. Even his sentence was later commuted. Ferré, for his courage, was sentenced to death.

Guiltless of any crime, his father was also imprisoned; his mother, driven mad by ill-treatment, had died insane the same July; his brother, equally innocent, was very ill in prison from Versaillese brutality. Only his young sister was left to give him any help in his last hours. Before his death, the colonel in command of the prison, Gaillard, thought of a hellish device to break his spirit. He took his young brother, now completely insane, and thrust him into Ferré's cell. For days Ferré, awaiting

[1] Retranslated from Lissagaray's *History*, p. 417, and Da Costa, *Commune Vécue*, ii. 58.

death, had to bear the ghastly sight of this raving lunatic who had once been his brother.

Sentence had been passed on 2nd September, but it was not till 28th November that he was told to get ready to die. He stopped to write to his sister.[1]

Tuesday, 28th November 1871.
9.30 *in the morning.*

MY VERY DEAR SISTER,—In a few instants I am going to die; at the last moment your memory will be with me; I beg you to ask for my body and reunite it to our unfortunate mother's. If you are able, insert in the papers the time of my burial so that friends can accompany; of course, no religious ceremony. I die a materialist as I have lived.

Put a wreath of immortelles on our mother's grave.

Try to cure our brother and console our father; tell them how much I loved them.

I embrace you a thousand times and thank you for all the kindness and care you lavished on me; overcome your grief and as you have so often promised me rise to the circumstances. As for me, I am happy. I am going to end my sufferings; there is no reason to be sorry for me. All to you. Your devoted brother,

TH. FERRÉ.

He added a postscript to the effect that she should claim his clothes and papers, but that he had given his money to prisoners more unfortunate than he. His neat writing was perfectly steady and regular, as though he had been writing a leader in a comfortable office.

He was taken out to be shot with Bourgeois, a soldier found in the Communard ranks, and Rossel, who for a while had served as its general. None of them showed any fear, but Rossel was melodramatic and delayed matters. They were taken out into the great plain of Satory, France's Salisbury Plain, and tied to three posts some distance apart. It was a bright November morning. Ferré refused to have his eyes bound. Merlin himself

[1] I translate almost literally. The French phrases sound strange in English, but the very words he used are now history. Paraphrase should not be allowed to obscure the exact phrases of this last document.

commanded the fire. Ferré, scarcely wounded by the volley, was killed by a shot through the ear from a soldier's rifle. At a signal from Merlin the band began to play and the regiments drawn up to watch the execution defiled past the corpses to the sound of a cheerful march tune.

THE ADMIRAL OF THE NORE MUTINEERS

RICHARD PARKER

AMONG the quota men taken on board Admiral Buckner's fleet at the Nore in 1797 was one who had seen better days. He arrived on the flagship *Sandwich* from Leith, where he had been taken on board a tender on March 31st. By name Richard Parker, he was "thirty years of age," writes his historian, Neale, "of a robust form, dark complexion and black eyes; his figure was five feet eight inches in its height, and both in feature and mould of person he was entitled to the term of manly comeliness." He was a well-educated man, and although it was stated that his father was only a merchant, he certainly belonged by his cast of mind and past profession to the governing classes. Educated at Exeter Grammar School, he had entered the Royal Navy as a midshipman, and became in 1783—at sixteen years of age—an acting lieutenant on the *Mediator*. His career was checked partly by his own fault—at least he gained the reputation of extreme irritability, and quarrelled both with his father and his captain. Therefore, when the Treaty of Versailles removed any probability of early promotion, it appears that he left the Navy with the intention of settling down in Scotland, where he married the daughter of a Braemar farmer.

Restless as ever, he rejoined the Navy in 1793 as an officer. In December of that year he met the disaster which thrust him out of the respectable class to which he belonged. He refused to obey an order of a superior officer which he thought unreasonable, was court-martialled and degraded to the rank of a common seaman. A year later he was discharged ill and went home to attempt to earn a living as a schoolmaster. He fell into debt and was imprisoned. To a competent sailor the way out was clear. He took the King's bounty money—£20—which more than covered his debt, and re-engaged himself as a common seaman.

He found his fellows at the Nore in a condition of great misery. The long and wearing war upon the French Republic had now lasted full three years. Almost unbelievable privations had been undergone by the seamen. Their pay had not been altered from the days of Charles II., while the prices of commodities had risen by at least a third. Not even if regularly paid would their wretched wages (19s. a month) have sufficed to keep their families without recourse to parish relief. But their wages were not paid, and remained unpaid for long periods, so much so that they had to petition that no arrears be greater than six months. Wages were sometimes in arrears for years, if a ship was long in commission. Deductions were made on various excuses, and, as one of their petitions said, they lived "in indigence and extreme penury." The pay of lieutenants had been raised, volunteers like Parker were highly rewarded, and even soldiers had received redress, but the seamen, who were justly proud of the British naval victories, were forgotten by the Government.

The food provided, even on paper, was insufficient. The unrestrained speculation of contractors made it vile and frequently inedible. The corruption of the administration docked it further in quantity and quality. Only fourteen ounces were served out to a pound, while the place of a purser on a big ship of the line was valued at as high a rate as £1000 a year, owing to the opportunities it afforded for peculation.

To these sufferings were added plain tyranny by the officers. The seamen were in practice submitted absolutely to the arbitrary will of their captain. There is on record a case of a commander killing the leader of a deputation with his own hand. No naval historian denies that the seamen suffered outrageous indignities and brutal punishments from the hands of their officers, frequently without the least justification. "Rome had her Neros and Caligulas," the Nore seamen wrote in their Address to their countrymen, "but how many characters of their description might we not mention in the British Fleet?"

Kidnapped by the press-gang, suffering under a brutal discipline administered by unfeeling officers, half-starved, under-paid, if paid at all, these men were by a refinement of cruelty almost always forbidden leave when in port. They were not permitted to land, although their families might well be starving. On the other hand, their officers, whose morality was that of the

eighteenth century, arranged for them to have prostitutes on board to lighten the tedium of port duties.

This extremity of misery and degradation was just tolerable in time of peace; the additional sufferings of war had spread discontent and the spirit of revolt throughout the fleet. It was an atmosphere of rebellion which Parker found on board the *Sandwich.* Independent and energetic, he at once took the side of the rebels, and as an educated man secured considerable respect and trust. The crews were in a most agitated condition, rumours were current of firm action taken by the Channel Fleet at Spithead to secure sailors their rights, and a mutiny was probable at any moment. Disloyal the seamen were not, but they were determined to put an end to the horrors of Navy life. One seaman wrote to the Admiralty:

For the Lords Commissioners of the Board of Admiralty:—

Dam my eyes if I understand your lingo or long proclamations, but, in short, give us our due at once, and no more of it, till we go in search of the rascals the eneyms of our country.

HENREY LONG.

NORE, *of June* 1797. On Board his Magesty Ship *Champion.*

At the beginning of May delegates arrived secretly from the Channel Fleet at Spithead. We do not know who they were nor how they came. We do not know exactly when they arrived, nor exactly what they said, but of the general tenor of their message we are pretty certain.

Briefly, they announced that the Channel Fleet sailors had become tired of bad and little food, low wages, imprisonment on board when in harbour. On April 17th, receiving no reply to repeated petitions, they had mutinied. They had occupied the ships, dismissed the unpopular officers and flown the Red Flag. The Admiralty had at first replied with violent threats of punishment. The seamen had, however, stood firm, though remaining most moderate and respectful in their language, and in the end the Lords Commissioners of the Board of Admiralty had travelled down to Portsmouth, declared practically all their demands granted and promised pardon. Therefore they had gone back to work. But no pardons appeared, the promised

reforms were not fulfilled, while the Bill containing their demands was delayed in Parliament. They were not going to suffer the fate of the *Culloden* mutineers who had surrendered upon promise of pardon and then been murdered. So on May 7th the whole fleet had mutinied again. It would not submit until the King's Pardon had arrived, signed and sealed, and the new reforms were in operation. No one knew what would be the end of it all; therefore, said the Spithead delegates, they were here to ask their brothers of the Nore to follow their example.

Although there were but twelve ships at the Nore, and those only medium-sized, and although they were not a fleet so much as a casual aggregation of ships put in for various purposes, the seamen showed no lack of *esprit de corps*. There was no hesitation in the answer to the Spithead men. All that was asked of the Spithead delegates was how to organise a mutiny. They listened carefully to the delegates' account of how the Channel Fleet was organised, and imitated it meticulously to the last detail. Each ship was to elect a Committee, whose president was to act as captain. From each ship two delegates were to be sent to the flagship, and the president of the delegates was to act as Admiral of the fleet. The signal for the revolt was to be three cheers given by the whole body of the crew, the hanging of ropes from the yard-arms and the flying of red flags.

There was much secret going to and fro between the ships, and in the end Richard Parker was selected for the difficult post of "Admiral." There remained only to fix the date of the revolt, and it appears that about this time the Spithead delegates quietly returned to their fleet.

The day selected, May 12th, was cunningly so chosen, for on that date the superior officers had to attend a court-martial on the *Inflexible*. The ships were thus left in charge of lieutenants, and at half-past nine or thereabouts in the morning the seamen of each ship crowded forward and gave three cheers, then they hung ropes out on the yard-arms and ran up red flags. The court-martial was hurriedly adjourned and the captains returned, in most cases to find their authority gone. All the ships were in the hands of the mutineers by the end of the day. Admiral Buckner had not the heart to go back to his flagship, the *Sandwich*, where Parker was already in control. Some of his officers followed him; others stayed aboard, but only on sufferance;

Others soon came ashore because they had to: the seamen were dismissing the bullies and petty tyrants whom they hated. The men were completely victorious. The officers were unprepared, and in a few hours the old authority had disappeared.

The Admiralty received Buckner's report with equanimity. The Spithead mutiny was well on the way to settlement and they regarded the Nore outbreak as a mere subdivision of it. They expected that the Nore men would automatically return to work when the Spithead men did. Thus the Nore mutineers had eight days in which they were practically left to themselves.

They employed this time in organising the fleet. Although the delegates were an elected authority, they were none the less firm in enforcing discipline and preventing the mutiny from degenerating into a riot. Drunkards and rioters were punished and the imitation courts-martial run by the sailors had, in one case at least, the pleasure of disciplining an officer who had allowed himself to resume his normal bullying and kicking habits. No "private liquor" was allowed. All officers who had not already been sent ashore were retained as hostages, but treated with careful respect. The women on board were also retained.

An oath was administered to each member of the mutiny, in which he swore "to be true to the delegates at present assembled." Nor was this a vain form, for everyone agreed that the sailors took this oath seriously and that it, more than anything else, prevented the mutiny from collapsing earlier.

Yet in spite of self-imposed discipline the fleet was free, and felt itself free. The seamen expressed their delight at their new-found liberty by composing and singing songs, some of which have survived, and by parading Sheerness behind brass bands. These noisy but quite harmless processions were of almost daily occurrence, and though the band could play nothing but *Rule, Britannia, God Save the King* and *Britons Strike Home*, the sailors were completely satisfied.

On each ship there was an elected Committee of twelve, one of whom acted as captain. On board the *Sandwich*, or more frequently at the "Chequers" in Sheerness, sat the delegates, two from each ship. At their head was the President, Richard Parker, now in fact, if not in name, Admiral of the Nore Fleet.

Their new-found freedom and this carefully constructed machinery of self-government made both the delegates and men

unwilling to go back to work when Admiral Buckner communicated to them the news that the Spithead men had returned to work, satisfied by the arrival of the pardons and concession of the major portion of their demands concerning food and wages. Delegates who arrived from Spithead to induce the Nore men to return were, to their surprise, met with bitter reproaches for going back without making a clean sweep of all grievances. Throughout the fleet there was a general reluctance to return to the prison-house after so short a spell of liberty, and it seems probable that Parker threw his influence on the side of remaining out at least until the Lords of the Admiralty had been forced to come down to Sheerness as they had gone to Spithead.

But though this almost puerile decision was adopted, further demands had to be put forward in order to excuse it, and in the drafting of them the delegates realised that there were serious reasons for remaining out and grievances that really needed righting. They handed in on May 20th a list of new demands. The first asked that the Spithead concessions be applied to them also, although this was already granted. They further demanded: Port leave, payment of wages in arrears, indemnification of re-enlisted deserters, advance of wages to pressed men, more equal distribution of prize-money, no re-employment on the same ship of officers discharged for misconduct, a revision of the brutal Articles of War, and the presence of the Lords of the Admiralty.

To this broadside of demands the Admiralty replied through Buckner on the 22nd with a flat negative. Parker and the delegates received the reply with unconcealed indignation and rowed off to the fleet without showing any signs of submission. For six days the situation remained thus in suspense, neither the fleet nor the officers on shore yielding in the least, but each facing the other with growing exasperation, and Parker and Buckner exchanging sharper notes than ever. Then, on May 28th, in spite of their proclaimed decision, four members of the Board of the Admiralty appeared in Sheerness.

They had been sent there by special order of the Cabinet. They did not come to negotiate, but as bearers of an ultimatum. They refused the delegates an interview, and informed them that they would consider nothing but surrender and a prayer for pardon. The Government had decided to crush the mutiny.

It is difficult for us to recapture the spirit of the latter end of the eighteenth century. We have to leave behind us all thoughts of Trade Unions and capitalist combines, of great warrens like Manchester and Liverpool, or of democratic Parliaments and vote-catching politicians. It was the age of the dignity of Dr Johnson and the solemnity of Edward Gibbon; of the stiff and artificial humour of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Sheridan —the age of a class which lived in dignified and unquestioned leisure upon the efforts of the rest of the mostly agricultural population. There did not enter into the minds of the members of this class, nor of their supporters, any doubt as to their right to occupy this position. Between them and their inferiors was a gulf which was hardly to be bridged. They could not even talk except in the relation of master and servant. There was no community of ideas, or even of religion. The upper classes listened, if at all, to unemotional sermons by wigged divines to whom Latin was nearly as easy a tongue as English: their inferiors heard either the simple but autocratic instructions of the local parson or the hysterical and wholly reprehensible enthusiasm of a wandering dissenter.

The security of this dominant class had been rudely shaken by the French Revolution. They had seen their class driven out, its property seized and its leaders executed by the lower orders, whom they so despised and patronised. Great as had been their security, their panic was even greater. Pitt, an able politician, encouraged these fears for his own ends, desiring to split the Whigs, until they saw in every chance tumult a revolution. Frightened beyond measure, they had passed the scandalous Three Acts and repressed savagely the most innocent Liberalism. They now had become convinced that the Nore mutiny was a Jacobin adventure, and were prepared to destroy it.

Though the delegates could not know this, they at least seem to have realised that a crisis had come when they received from the Lords of the Admiralty a flat refusal. They met to discuss the question and continued for two days. Richard Parker had by this time found that his position was no sinecure. Like most leaders, he had his Right and Left wings to manage. He had to cope with delegates like those from the *Clyde* and *San Fiorenzo*, whom he rightly suspected of only awaiting a suitable opportunity to desert, and with delegates like those of the *Inflexible*, who

regarded him as weak and shuffling. These latter were mostly United Irishmen, and were well infected with the equalitarian principles of the French Revolution. They wanted a revolution, and failing that would desert to France. Parker had to deal with all shades of opinion from that down to the *Clyde* argument that, since the Admiralty objected, the mutiny had better end.

The discussion was long and bitter. We cannot well doubt, at this stage, on which side Parker was. A hasty and generous man, he certainly gave his vote for continuing the mutiny, in face of this blank rebuff. A delegate was sent to the Secretary of the Admiralty delegation, curtly informing them that a majority had decided to continue the mutiny (May 29th).

The Lords of the Admiralty left for London. The first and only attempt at negotiations was over. The two parties faced each other in straight opposition. Henceforward it was war. And as though to mark it, Sheerness was put in a state of defence and the mutineers excluded. The seamen were disconcerted. The *San Fiorenzo* and the *Clyde* raised the white flag and escaped. There were struggles on other ships, including a dispute on Parker's flagship, the *Sandwich*. The mutiny seemed about to end in defeat.

. . . . . .

As the *San Fiorenzo* escaped out to sea down the Thames estuary she met with a number of larger ships flying red flags and putting in to the Thames mouth. Not knowing what they were, the crew for safety's sake rehoisted the red flag, gave three cheers and were allowed to pass undisturbed. Then on Tuesday evening (the 30th) these same mysterious ships, to the astonishment and discomfiture of the waiting officers on land, came dropping down, one after another, to Sheerness.

It soon became known that they had arrived from Yarmouth, and were the body of Admiral Duncan's fleet. Duncan's fleet was no unimportant aggregation like the Nore fleet, but practically the sole defence of England against the Dutch. Duncan was at that moment blockading the Texel with only two ships, all that were left of his fleet. The Lords of the Admiralty had foolishly instructed him to suppress the Nore mutiny, but when he gave the signal to stand out to sea, only two ships—his flagship and the *Adamant*—were with him, and with them he went to the

Texel. The rest of his ships came down to the Nore in batches to aid the mutiny, the last group arriving on June 6th.

With the number of mutinous ships more than doubled by this addition, there was no more talk of surrender. Parker was himself again, and on June 2nd gave an order which might almost have led to victory. He could not attack the fort of Sheerness, because his fleet would not have fired nor the soldiers have surrendered; he could not sail for France or Ireland, because the sailors were not yet prepared for desertion. Therefore the Committee ordered the blockade of London. The fleet was drawn up across the Thames mouth, with, roughly, half-mile intervals between each ship. Four ships—two sloops and two battleships—in the channel between the Nore and Southend captured every merchantman or provision boat that arrived. The chain of ships drawn up behind prevented any escape. In four days a hundred and more ships were in their hands.

This was the high-water mark of their success. A fortnight before the Admiralty had been certain of triumph. Since then it had been forced to come down to Sheerness, after protesting that it would not, and been sent back with a rebuff. The mutineers had been joined by fourteen more ships, another of England's fleets had disappeared from her defences, and the capital of the country was blockaded. The Government was stung to vigorous action. They completed the isolation of the fleet from the land, stopping all supplies and communications. Pitt brought into Parliament and carried without difficulty a Bill authorising the Admiralty to declare any ship it chose to be "in a state of rebellion"—in other words, handing over the mutineers in effect to the discretion of the Lords Commissioners.

We know very little of the internal life of the fleet during this time. Some jack-in-office at the Admiralty has destroyed the *Promiscuous Letters* which contained the most valuable information. We are in the position of any landsman observer at Southend at that date. He could have seen the long line of graceful, high-pooped ships of the time, with red flags fluttering from the intricate rigging, and the entangled mass of masts rising from the hundred and more merchant ships held idly near the Nore Light. For with this group and the mass of outward-bound shipping stopped by Government order at Gravesend, the Thames estuary seemed a forest of masts and rigging.

Such an observer would have seen, on June 5th, that the four ships set to hunt and capture merchantmen were lying idle, and the traffic of the river beginning to move again; and on the 10th he could have seen the mass of trading ships held prisoner separately and slowly resume their voyage upstream. Parker had signed an order permitting all but naval storeships to pass, and although the reason given was to placate London opinion and to show the seamen's loyal intentions, there is little doubt that it was really an evidence of discouragement. The prizes of the fleet were really a grave encumbrance, and the jest of some twenty-five ships guarding a hundred was becoming dangerous.

At the moment the effect of this discouragement was to exacerbate the sailors. They hung Pitt and Dundas (in effigy) from the yard-arm. Parker wrote an insulting letter to Buckner. They threatened to ill-treat officers on board unless the stray mutineers captured on land were returned. But they fairly quickly decided on more pacific measures, and on June 6th sent, through Lord Northesk, captain of the *Monmouth*, a direct appeal to the King and an Address to the people of England. From neither of these did they gain anything, the Admiralty having decided not to permit any more negotiations.

The very next day the Admiralty took the step which defeated the mutiny. They had the lights and buoys removed. Anyone who glances at a chart of the Thames mouth will realise that it would be madness to attempt to sail through that tangle of shallows with the buoys removed. The fleet was now pinned, a prisoner. It dare not sail up the river; it could not sail out. It would be starved out.

The delegates were deeply alarmed. For the moment, desperation gave matters into the hands of the revolutionaries. Parker seems to have let things slide and merely carried out the orders given him by this left wing. They decided that on 9th June the fleet would sail to the Humber, there take prizes, and then to the Texel and surrender to France. An alternative project, scattering the fleet, some to France, some to Ireland, some to America, was apparently rejected. Therefore on June 9th the *Sandwich* gave the signal to sail. The rest of the ships acknowledged it. The *Sandwich* waited, but not a ship moved. Whatever the delegates might say, the seamen would not face the sands of the

Thames estuary uncharted. The last effort of the mutiny had failed.

So from the 9th to the 16th the mutinous ships one by one drifted down to Sheerness and surrendered. The *Leopard* and the *Repulse* started the rot, and each ship, after a fight between the two parties inside, followed them in. Some few ringleaders escaped in open boats, but most were caught for the bloody revenge the Admiralty was preparing.

On board the *Sandwich* there was no struggle. Parker had by now fallen back entirely under old influences. He had become again the English gentleman of the eighteenth century. Oppressed by a feeling of the wickedness of rebellion against his king and his class, he was now only concerned with making a proper submission and atonement for what now seemed to him a ghastly mistake. He himself led with three cheers and assisted to weigh anchor when the ship went over. He received the gleeful Buckner with respect and quietly submitted to being put in irons.

It had originally been intended to bring Parker before a civil court, but an order issued on June 19th arraigned him before a court-martial. The Admiralty did not desire any of the scruples which might have hindered a civil court to save Parker from death. Indeed, Nepean of the Admiralty wrote before the trial to Admiral Pasley, the President of the Court :

" You may prove anything you like against him, for he has been guilty of everything that's bad. Admiral Buckner will be a material evidence to state the proceedings which took place on his visit to the *Sandwich* and which indeed of itself appears sufficient to dispose of a dozen scoundrels of Parker's description."

And this presumably just judge replied after the trial :

" My dear Sir,—The conviction of this villain Parker must have been so dear to you at the Admiralty that the place and time of his execution might have been previously settled. It would have been on such an occasion perhaps more exemplary had the Court assumed the power lodged in their own breast by the Articles of War and executed him the hour of conviction, but their wish was to refer time and place to their Lordships, in whose power is that of his Majesty. We all wish it may be possible to order him to be hung in chains in some conspicuous place as an example."

Little enough did it matter with such judges what evidence was brought forward at the trial, which began on Thursday, June 22nd, on board the *Neptune* in the Long Reach on the Medway between Chatham and Sheerness. The prisoner was by this time completely broken in. The influence of his early education and the atmosphere of the eighteenth century were too much for him. He was no longer upheld by any enthusiasm for the cruelly oppressed seamen whom he had led; he thought only of assuming the dignifiedly contrite but resigned attitude befitting a man of gentle blood who found himself in such a position in the reign of His Most Excellent Majesty King George III. In his trial he attempted merely to prove that he had been a moderating influence, and had assumed power only in order to check the extremists. He argued that he had always, as far as he could, secured respect for the officers, and had never shown any disloyalty to the King. There was much evidence given by officers to the effect that they had or had not in their opinion been treated with proper civility by Parker, but there was very little evidence of any real value. It was the admitted fact of the mutiny on which Parker was condemned.

One sycophant, a seaman named Parry on the *Director*, gave evidence intended to prove Parker a violent extremist. This stung Parker to a rage, and he asked Parry what he had been promised for "this hellish account." Otherwise he maintained his dignified attitude.

On Monday he was condemned to death. His wife made vain attempts to save his life by proving him a lunatic; the Admiralty brushed her appeals aside.

On June 30th the sentence was to be carried out. He was to be hung at the yard-arm of the *Sandwich*, which flew the traditional yellow flag for the occasion. Upon this occasion also he was careful to maintain, as far as in him lay, the proper conduct of an eighteenth-century gentleman; to protest his loyalty, and to meet death courageously, with the aid of religion but without any signs of the emotion or of the "enthusiastic" expressions of a Wesleyan. "His conduct," writes the historian, "was rational and religious, without ostentation or sublimated ecstasy."

He was called to the quarter-deck at half-past eight, where the chaplain informed him that he had selected two Psalms—appropriate to the occasion. "And with your permission, sir,

I will add a third," replied Parker, naming the 51st, which he recited with the clergyman.

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions.

"Wash me throughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

"For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.

"Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow."

He then rose from his knees, and desired and received a glass of wine. Then with bound arms he was led to the forecastle, between a double file of marines, and on to the cat-head, where a platform was erected, with an elevated projection.

Here he spoke very briefly, saying that he did not desire to address the ship's company, but merely expressing the hope that his death might be held a sufficient atonement for the mutiny, and that others would be spared. The crew, drawn up to witness his death, remained silent and motionless, but their feelings must have been unenviable as they watched the fate of the man they had so enthusiastically acclaimed and so basely deserted.

Having asked whether the gun was well primed and borrowed a white handkerchief, he walked with the halter round his neck steadily up the platform to the end of the scaffold. There he dropped the handkerchief, thrusting his hands suddenly and firmly into his coat pockets.

Instantly the bow-gun was fired and the yard-rope swung him from the scaffold and slowly ran him up to the yard-arm. Midway in its last journey the prisoner's frame was seized with a violent convulsion, lasting a few seconds. When his body reached the yard-arm he was dead.

MR SMITH

THE REV. J. E. SMITH

MR SMITH is not a very distinguished name to possess. And even when, as in this case, Mr Smith becomes the Rev. Mr Smith, he still remains obscure. So obscure was Smith, indeed, that probably not one in twenty of our modern historians could place him. He is, it is true, mentioned in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, but under a wrong name.

James Elishama (not "Elimalet") Smith was born in 1801, the son of a Glasgow manufacturer. His father was intensely religious and Puritanical. From him Smith inherited that peculiar semi-metaphysical, semi-mystic cast of mind which is so difficult for a south-country Englishman to understand. The house in which he was brought up was full not merely of disputations on doctrine and study of the text of the Bible, but also of argument on the new prophets—the successors of Joanna Southcote, who were claiming the same authority as Amos and Isaiah, and whom James's father, the adherent of Edward Irving, was half inclined to follow.

Though a manufacturer, Mr Smith, senior, was by no means well off, and it was only his determination to send all his numerous sons into the ministry that gave to James the fair education he received at Glasgow University. In 1818 James left Glasgow, and earned his living as a tutor and church probationer. This mode of life he carried on until 1829, but made no attempt to join the Church. Instead he fell into the hands of the new prophets.

New prophets do not abound in our day. Scarcely do there remain a few strange sects like the Christadelphians or the more bourgeois Theosophists to remind us of the insatiable desire which swept over our fathers for revelation. Joanna Southcote (died 1814) we were reminded of suddenly a year or so ago by a large poster in the London Tubes demanding that "the bishops

open Joanna Southcote's box," and curiosity has made some scholars hunt up facts about her. She issued a large number of prophecies and instructions, and moreover left a Church. This was believed to have become practically extinct with the death of J. J. Jezreel, the last prophet, in 1885, but the posters in the Tubes, mentioned above, seem to show that it is still alive.

But Joanna was only the first and greatest of an enormous number of prophets, all of whom met with a considerable success, and left volumes of canonical writings. Lindsay, Boon, George Turner, Ward, John Wroe were perhaps the best known of them. They were mostly in the Southcotian tradition, and one, at least (John Wroe), was actually in the " Body," as it was called.

They are indeed a strange outgrowth of the suffering and distracted mind of the English lower classes of 1800 to 1840. It is not surprising that the consolations of religion were demanded by the victims of the Industrial Revolution, or that new revelations of heaven were forthcoming. But the character of these later prophecies is strange. They show that nothing was too degraded to achieve success ; they explain very easily the energy which Robert Owen put into his secularist campaign. To many of us Owen's rationalism seems only a private foible and a further evidence of the immaturity of his teaching ; a study of the popular religious literature of the time shows how necessary and inevitable his propaganda was.

The most surprising of these is perhaps George Turner, whose picture of heaven (the thing most urgently demanded by converts) was of a place in which the power of man and woman to enjoy one another should be increased " and that an hundredfold." The details of his life and of his behaviour towards the female members of his flock may be gathered from his works, where they are sandwiched in between unending calculations concerning the number of the Beast, rant from Isaiah, and prophecies of the end of the world. His lubricity, like that of the other prophets, probably proceeded from insanity. But it is important to observe that although Smith, in an amusing passage which I am afraid to reproduce, pillories Turner's teaching, he nevertheless wrote of Turner's adopted son and Messiah, John Ward, " much of his doctrine I admire as a *principle.*" And Smith was an intelligent man.

The particular prophet into whose fold Smith fell was John Wroe, whose followers had to wear beards. Wroe claimed to have succeeded to Joanna Southcote's prophetical power and to have the power of healing. Smith was for a time convinced of his genuineness, but in 1827 and 1830 charges were brought of criminal intercourse and misconduct against him by his domestic servants. A jury of friends was made up at the later date to investigate the charges, and an acquittal was only secured by the expulsion of two members of the jury, of whom one was Smith. He and many others now cut off their beards and left Wroe, whose followers made a schism in the Southcotians, and called themselves Christian Israelites.

In 1831, on leaving Wroe, with whom he had been living at Ashton-under-Lyne, Smith returned to Scotland and practised painting, for which he showed a fair talent, in order to get money enough to come down to London and lecture. This he did next year.

He was probably now at the height of his powers. When he left the Wroe church he left behind also his belief in the immediate coming of Christ and in the inspired character of the follies of the new prophets. But the taste for revelation and inspection of the intricacies of the Bible never left him. His character became now sharply divided, so much that one would have said there were two persons. His long, thin, humorous and typically Scotch face truly indicated common sense and ability. No man had a better sense of a jest than Smith; no one was more competent in practical affairs; no one had a clearer head or was a more dangerous adversary. But behind this acute Scotsman was a semi-Oriental mystic—a man who had once believed in John Wroe and was now evolving "Universalism," a mystical religion. He still claimed the title Reverend (given him, I believe, by John Wroe), and opened his chapel in London, charging one penny entrance fee. The Universalism he here preached was continually struggling for the mastery of his mind with the other more mundane Smith. Its character may be gathered from the title of his collected lectures (1833):—

The *Antichrist*, or Christianity Reformed, in which is demonstrated from the Scriptures, in opposition to the prevailing opinion of the Whole Religious World, that Evil and Good are from one

source; Devil and God one Spirit; and that the one is merely manifested to make perfect the other. By the Rev. J. E. Smith, A.M.

Here is a specimen of his style in elaborating this curious thesis. Even if he was mad, his writing shows he was no fool:

"WAGGERY

"The God of the Bible is evidently a wag; he speaks one way and means another; and very often, grave as all the parsons look in the pulpit, is very jocular. Thus, for instance (Jerem. xxi. 14), speaking of the happiness to which he means hereafter to raise the human race, he says, 'And I will satiate the soul of the priest with fatness. This is a capital wipe to our full-fed ecclesiastics and is as good as a hint to them, if their interest would permit them to take it, that the Lord is merely quizzing and scare-crowing them when he preaches so sanctimoniously upon atonement, justification, election, and damnation. And this reminds me of what he is said to have told a certain celebrated Prophetess alluded to in a preceding note, that he was merely jesting with men in the Gospel, to try the wisdom of the pretended wise men. She believed this; but when the Devil told her that God was a d——d liar, she was quite shocked. However, it would be a very difficult task to refute this accusation of the Devil's from the Bible, since we have so many of the Lord's own confessions to corroborate it. Whereas the Devil himself, in the sacred writings, stands quite irreproachable; he gets an abusive name now and then, certainly, but nicknames are no proof against a man's character; yet a bad name is all that the clergy can allege against the Devil. How would they themselves like to be all strung up like a parcel of dried haddocks, merely because some malicious persons gave them the nickname of rascals; yet this would only be serving them as they have served the Devil. If a dog gets a bad name they say you may hang it, for nobody will believe any good of it afterwards. Poor Devil! He has been sadly abused and maltreated, all by that waggish elder brother of his; who, like the ladies, as Dr Goldsmith avers, always means No when he says Yes and Yes when he says No" (p. 14).

Or if anyone knows of a copy of *Antichrist* let him read pp. 94 onwards for a brilliant piece of writing which a modern clergyman (quite wrongly) would call indecent.

But already Smith was feeling very strongly the influence of Robert Owen, whose meetings he was diligently attending and whose denunciation of the effects of the capitalist system appealed to the saner side of him. Even in *Antichrist* (p. 80) he wrote:

"'The Lord forbade the Israelites to bring wages of a whore or the price of a dog into the sanctuary.' But the parsons are contented to live on funds more dishonourably acquired than by selling dogs or female smiles—they live on the wages of hypocrisy and imposture and suck the blood of the poor by feeding upon those funds which were originally collected from a charitable and generous public under the pretext of relieving the necessities of the needy. Thus we see that whilst the first apostles *sold* their property to give to the poor, the modern apostles *take it back from the poor* and convert to their *own* use. Is not this the spirit of what they *call* Antichrist? It is better to be Antichrist in *name only* than Antichrist in *reality*."

It is clear from this that even in 1832 he was turning his attention from Gnostic fancies to the realities of the oppression about him, and as soon as he did that, the victory of the saner side of his character was assured. The change was caused by the lectures of Robert Owen, whom he assiduously followed at this time. Owen was at his best period. He had ceased the foundation of model communities, and had come into contact, through the "Labour Exchanges," with the actual proletariat. His power of analysing and denouncing the evils of capitalism and competition was at its highest; his preoccupation with secularism and moral instruction had not yet become an obsession. Smith was recognised by him and others as a most valuable ally, and became second only to Owen himself in the movement, lecturing alternately with him at the Charlotte Street Institute. Moreover, on September 22nd, 1833, Smith took over the editorship of the *Crisis*, the official Owenite journal, which had fallen to the miserable circulation of 1250. It is significant of his ability that the circulation of the paper went up at once and maintained for six months a high rate of increase.

Owenism just then was swept into a new and important movement. The Reform Bill of 1832 had shown the workers the

spectacle of a bloodless revolution. The English middle class, by a combination of threats, disorder, and political manœuvring, had destroyed the political power of the aristocracy. At the same time they had cheated the working-classes of the hopes that they had pinned upon the Reform Bill. Now, a year later, the workers were in effect going to try to "rush" the bourgeois Government as the middle class had rushed the Duke of Wellington's. To the Parliamentary agitation of 1832 succeeded immediately a revolutionary trades union movement—in fact, though not in name, a more powerful Syndicalist movement. At the time at which Smith took over the *Crisis* this movement was only represented by one enormous union, the Builders' Union, which had, however, succeeded in gravely disquieting the employers. The flood-tide of trades[1] unionism did not come till the winter of 1833 was well on.

The Builders' Union already had an unofficial organ, the *Pioneer*, edited by James Morrison. This and the *Crisis* became the national unionist journals. Smith and Morrison found that their views more or less coincided, and they worked together on a common policy. The circulation of the *Pioneer*, says Smith in one of his letters, reached the then astounding figure of 30,000.

In January of 1834 there was forged the instrument which was to break down capitalist rule in England and usher in the Socialist State outlined by Robert Owen. The *Grand National Consolidated Trades Union* was formed, by delegates from trades unions and groups all over the country. Into it were sucked up practically all the existing local bodies. It swept up into itself all the small Owenite societies, and accepted the Owenite programme in its entirety. There remained outside it only five unions of any importance or energy, and they were completely dwarfed by it. In two months its membership reached half-a-million—a dizzying total never attained after or before by any union in the century. It was a monstrous growth, this union, with its militant Socialist policy; it fills the journals of the time as though it were some pestilence or other national disaster. The employers were well and thoroughly frightened.

In February the Union had assumed a permanent constitution, had elected an Executive, formed local lodges (generally by

[1] A *trade* union is one covering a single trade, a *trades* union one covering all or many—say, the London Society of Compositors and the I.W.W.

crafts) and put its finances on a reasonable basis. It meant business.

It had three leaders. First and most powerful by far was the justly respected Robert Owen. But beside him, and more and more opposed to him, were the two left-wingers, Smith and Morrison. Owen, in spite of his self-confidence, was obviously unfit for his position. It is hard to say it of so great and good a man, but it is the fact that he talked twaddle. Having placed himself at the head of a great and militant union, having given it for its aim the destruction of capitalism, he now attempted to forbid any verbal or other attack upon the employers. He attempted to run a strike policy on an avowed "class-peace" basis. As his difficulties increased, he seemed to become more crotchety and difficult to work with; he indulged in attacks on Christianity and turned from Union work to the exposition of his philosophy of life. He became more and more tactless, more and more short-tempered, arrogant and contemptuous of advice.

Smith, compared with him, stands out as a brilliant leader. He was as competent as Owen was incompetent, as clear-headed as he was muddled. He at once saw both the fundamentals of the class-struggle (this is in the year 1834, mind you, not 1884) and the only possible tactics for the Union. Morrison, who became an Executive member of the Union, followed his advice and acted as his spokesman. Thus, for a brief period, Smith was the most competent leader of some 500,000 revolutionary-minded Englishmen—a unique position in modern history.

In the *Pioneer*, in a series of "Letters on Associated Labour," he writes[1]:

"We know that the operative manufacturer [*i.e.* factory worker] and in fact the labourer of every description, requires sustenance, raw materials and tools. These are derived from the reserved produce of former labour, which is termed *capital.* That amount of capital in this country is very great, but, brethren, it was you that gave it existence. What hours out of every twenty-four have you not employed in building it up! . . . Reflect, though in the reflection, brethren, I know there is much anguish, how many of your fellow-labourers, how many with whom you have communed in friendship, how many connected with you by the respected and the endeared ties of relationship, have sunk in toil

[1] See my *Revolution*, p. 94.

and want ; pale, sickening and starving ; while all the energies of their bodies and of their minds were given to the rearing of this mighty mass, this boasted *capital*! 'It is reserved labour,' cries M'Culloch. 'Ay, reserved,' shout a hundred bloated capitalists over their French and Spanish wines, 'reserved for our present and future prosperity!' From whom and out of what was it reserved? From the clothing and food of the wretched—from the refreshment of the weary—from the wages of those who sink exhausted on their hard pallets after sixteen hours of almost ceaseless labour."

This vivid, almost ferocious, Socialist teaching we find scattered about the pages of the *Pioneer*, at a time when Owen, commonly supposed to be the most advanced and clear-headed Labour thinker of those days, was still exhorting his followers to base their actions on a realisation "that both masters and men were producers."

Smith will perhaps be best remembered for the lecture which he delivered on March 30th, entitled "On the Prospects of Society." In this lecture he outlined for the first time the Soviet idea, and it required no small force of mind and character to be able, at so early a date as this, to pass beyond the common revolutionary aspiration towards Parliamentary democracy. He exposed, in a passage now fairly well known[1] the unsuitability of geographical constituencies for the representation of the modern industrial proletariat, and outlined the real House of Commons the "House of Trades," in which "every trade shall be a borough and every trade shall have its council and representatives to conduct its affairs."

But the brief period of high hopes in which such schemes could be taken seriously was coming near to its close. The Government, alarmed beyond measure, turned savagely upon the Union and struck it a heavy blow by seizing some Dorchester agricultural labourers, who had enrolled members, and having them sentenced to transportation under an old statute. All efforts were unsuccessful to reverse this monstrous decision.

The Union involved itself in further and worse difficulties. It enrolled every worker who cared to join, and therefore in every town where there was a "turn out" the strikers naturally joined the Union and claimed its assistance. In addition, every lodge

[1] It is quoted in Max Beer's *History of British Socialism*, i. 339, and in my own *Revolution*, p. 98.

of the Union was filled with ardent enthusiasm and fighting spirit, and almost courted conflicts with the employers. The Union was involved in innumerable petty and useless strikes; from the 9th of May onwards it was practically bankrupt and subsisted on levies, which of course helped to cool the enthusiasm of the rank and file.

Here again Smith was practically the only leader to perceive the practical policy. While the Executive was still maundering about the possibilities of co-operative production, he published (May 3rd) a denunciation of the system of "partial strikes" and independent action, and urged the necessity of refusing battle until the Union was prepared for a general strike—"a long strike, and a strong strike, and a strike all together."

Conceivably, he might have carried out his proposals and saved the Union, had not the employers delivered a concerted offensive. All over England and Scotland they began to present the "Document" to their employees to sign. This was an assurance that they neither belonged nor would belong to the Union. If they refused, they were locked out. Thus upon the already tottering Union was thrust an enormous number of further conflicts.

Internal dissensions brought the end. Owen decided that the open opposition to his views by Smith and Morrison must be silenced. In April he began publicly to denounce the *Pioneer*; in June he forced Morrison off the Executive, and started a rival journal, also called the *Pioneer*. Morrison's *Pioneer* ceased publication on July 5th. In August Owen closed down the *Crisis*, to prevent Smith continuing to write.

Owen had won in his vendetta, but at the cost of the Union's life. It was by now in complete collapse, and on August 20th abandoned the pretence of being a Trade Union, and became "The British and Foreign Consolidated Association of Industry, Humanity and Knowledge," an Owenite propagandist body. The first mass frontal attack on capital by British workers had failed.

The psychological effect on Smith was strange. During the struggle the sanest part of him had been supreme. In defeat he became again the mystic Smith, the disciple of John Wroe. He started a paper called the *Shepherd*, which purveyed general information of the irrelevant kind now provided by Harmsworth

encyclopædias. In it he also began to deal again with religion. There was no mention of any economic or political subject. Nor was there much more in the *Shepherd's* successor, the *Penny Satirist.* In the end he became editor of the *Family Herald.*

The *Family Herald* was a new venture in journalism, being illustrated, and almost entirely consisting of fiction. Smith, as editor, had little to do but write occasional articles, answers to correspondents, and religious matter. His lively style was unimpaired and the *Family Herald* rose to a circulation of 250,000. His answers to correspondents were particularly praised, and no doubt deserved it, for he had to answer letters from women who desired to know if they should wear stays, others who believed him to be the Messiah, others who were outraged by his religious eccentricities, others who wanted household recipes—in short, every question which a successful journalist could possibly be asked.

Nothing now was left of his old opinions. He was now Smith the mystic ; Smith the revolutionary was dead. He was solely concerned with proving the numerical theory of the universe and the predominance of the feminine principle in history—whatever those words may mean. His mind had retired into the darkest recesses of modern occultism, and of his old ideas nothing was left but a vague dislike of Parliament and an equally vague idea that a man ought to belong to his Union.

Twenty years later, in 1857, he visited Scotland, where he died of a decline, sincerely lamented by many as a respectable and worthy, if eccentric, clergyman. An account of him was inserted in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, all reference to his past revolutionary activities being omitted.

TWO CITIZENS OF '48

LOUIS BLANC AND LOUIS PUJOL

IN October 1811 J. J. Louis Blanc was born. His grandfather had been executed during the Terror, and the little boy learned to dislike and fear the Jacobins. He received the usual education of a boy of the middle classes, and in the reign of Louis Philippe came to Paris as a journalist. His was, perhaps, the first alert mind to be struck by the grim realities of the growing industrialism of France. While Godefroy Cavaignac, Armand Marrast and the other romantic Republicans of the time were contemplating the ideal Republic, re-reading Rousseau and Robespierre, and fighting for the restoration of 1793, Louis Blanc did a strange and new thing. He went about the workshops collecting facts. He studied economic statistics. He saw the proletariat and capital already in opposition; but most of all he was struck by the suffering of the workers. In 1839 he published his greatest work, *The Organisation of Labour*, in which he outlined a system of co-operative workshops, supported by the State, which would eventually drive out the private capitalist and bring about what was then called "the Social Republic." These proposals he accompanied by a really able destructive analysis of the effects of capitalist competition and a nightmare-like picture of the capitalist struggle for existence in industry, where the competing workers and employers fight for life as the stifling prisoners did in the Black Hole of Calcutta. His book was like a thunderbolt in "advanced" circles. Edition after edition was called for, and the Republicans were forced to revise all their thoughts and programmes. From sentimental believers in violence they had to become, willy-nilly, the defenders of the workers, with an industrial programme. Blanc easily became their most distinguished publicist, and by his *History of the Revolution* and *History of Ten Years* definitely joined himself with the extreme Republicans and forsook his Girondin traditions.

"Little Louis," as the Parisian worker called him, to distinguish him from a rival exponent of social theories—Louis Napoleon Bonaparte—was a strange leader for a revolutionary class, and the Paris workers were at least that. He was short to absurdity, very dapper and well dressed, not a little conceited, and his plump, permanently pleased face gave more evidence of good intention than executive ability. The plan he was laying before French advanced circles was this:

The Democratic and Republican Government-to-be must consider itself not a political institution but the organiser of production. To enable it to take up this task Blanc originally thought that it should raise a loan, but the commercial crash of 1848, which made many business men only too anxious to dispose of their businesses, suggested that it might be achieved by granting the ex-capitalists bonds on their late establishments. Anyway, whether independently by a loan, or from establishments taken over from business men in difficulties, the Government was to set up *social factories* of every kind, which being subsidised and run with the economies of centralised production would rapidly oust the thousands of comparatively small competitors. These factories at first should be under state control, but as they became firmly rooted (Blanc put the period at one year) the control would be handed over to the workers. The workers should first have been educated in sound principles—such as wage equality—and the division of profits was to be on a fixed scale, which Blanc outlined.

A naïve unworkable plan, perhaps, and of limited enough vision. But we have no right to judge it thus. We must forget Sidney Webb and modern English industrialism: forget Marx and any coherent economic theory at all. If we compare Blanc with his only predecessors—the inevitable trio of Utopian community-founders, St Simon, Cabet, and Fourier—he becomes at once clearly the first working-class leader of them all—the first Socialist to have a policy, a scheme of things that could be done there and then, and not a fundamentally pessimist and foolish scheme for a hole-and-corner Utopia.

A pleasant, if rather sterile, life of agitation was brought to a sudden end in the February of 1848. Unexpectedly, with the suddenness of a bomb explosion, the people of Paris rose, drove out the king and proclaimed the Republic. A haphazard list

of names read to the crowd became the Provisional Government, and among these names was Louis Blanc's. With the exception of Albert, his dog-like follower, all the rest were more "to the Right" than Blanc.

As the tumult abated slightly this little, dapper, conceited man found himself in the rather alarming position of the representative of the proletariat. His position and mind remind one forcibly of those of a member of the National Guilds League to-day. He had a "plan" or a system to bring the revolution. He was not a worker himself, but he was anxious that the workers should adopt and criticise his plan, and was really willing to serve them. He was also notably unfit to be a revolutionary leader; he was as irresolute in action as he was fearless in theory. His first act, as would be a Guildsman's to-day, was to call together the representatives of the workers and ask them for their support and advice. He summoned the first Soviet—the Assembly of Workers' Delegates at the Luxembourg. But (unlike to-day) the Assembly was not a meeting of obstinate and opinionated delegates of firmly rooted workers' associations, but the chance representatives of an infantile proletariat. The working class first began to acquire form and consciousness under Blanc's hands: the Luxembourg Assembly was an enormous and rather risky step forward. And so the delegates reflected the unripeness of the workers; they were unable to criticise or suggest—they accepted uncritically all Blanc said. They undertook certain trade-union functions, and did a good deal of propaganda; for the rest, they confined themselves to going through Blanc's proposals, based on *The Organisation of Labour*, and approving them clause by clause. The completed report was handed to the National Assembly when it met.

But while the workers were sitting at Blanc's feet, their governors were not idle. The right wing gained an immense majority in the Assembly. Louis Blanc was excluded from the new Government. The Luxembourg report was ignored. After various provocations, the irresponsible leaders of the Paris clubs headed a foolish attempt to dissolve the Assembly, which met with disaster. The Luxembourg delegates withdrew from the public eye. At the same time, also, Louis Blanc's influence declined rapidly. The workers were convinced that his eloquent appeals to the members of the Chamber were useless and revolution was again brewing.

So when the storm burst and the bourgeois Republicans turned machine-guns on the proletarian insurrection of June, Louis Blanc had no share in the workers' revolt. He was taken by surprise and had nothing to do but make broken-hearted appeals in the Assembly. After the workers' defeat he fled to England.

Twenty years and more later, after the fall of Napoleon III., he returned to France. To his admirers it was like finding the charred stick of a used rocket. The brilliance and daring of the young man of '48 had vanished. Nothing was left but a garrulous and likeable little old gentleman, of Liberal views. He lived comfortably and easily in France until his death at the age of nearly seventy, and when the papers said "LOUIS BLANC'S DEATH," it came to many as a strange and sudden reminder of their youth, of the days when their hopes were high and France and the Republic were young.

. . . . . .

Louis Blanc was the living thought of the Revolution of '48. A few stray notes, preserved by chance, have kept for us some record of one of the actual leaders of the workers in the June battles. Hardly, perhaps, even a leader of that unorganised and dimly conscious mass, but one whom accident placed in their front line. His name was Louis Pujol.

He was a typical Frenchman, a fellow of Cyrano de Bergerac. He knew nothing of social theory, or the class war, or the proletariat; courage and a touch of dramatic instinct were his only qualifications for leadership. Wine and women he loved, too much indeed, and bragging and rioting. But he saw a struggle going on, and he threw his sword on the side of the weaker and joined in the great adventure of the Revolution.

He had spent many years as an army "bad lot," brave but undisciplined. 1848 brought him freedom. He was a violent orator and had published [1] before the June days a rather ranting *Prophecy of Days of Blood*, which shows a slight literary talent run to seed. Then the Assembly decided in June to close down the National Workshops, where thousands had found an insufficient livelihood, and let the workers starve and wages reach their economic level. The workers, led by the delegates of the Luxembourg Assembly, showed they were going to fight. They

[1] P. 211 of my *Revolution, 1789 to 1906*.

demanded an interview with Marie, Minister of Public Works, and a delegation was introduced, headed by Pujol.

Marie was a whiskered, flabby-faced bureaucrat, who, like many weak men, took refuge in violent language. Pujol had hardly begun his speech when Marie interrupted him, saying he would not hear a man who had taken part in the earlier attempt to dissolve the Assembly. He pushed Pujol aside and asked the other delegates to speak. At once Pujol was awake: "No one speaks here before I do!" he cried. The delegates murmured their support. Marie angrily said: "Are you this man's slaves?" Pujol replied: "You are insulting the people's delegates." Then Marie lost his temper. "Your heads are turned. It is Louis Blanc's system. We won't have it." Pink with rage, he seized Pujol's arm and shouted: "Do you realise you are speaking to a member of the Executive Power?"

Pujol threatened to withdraw, and Marie calmed down long enough to let him make a short speech about the February revolution and the misery of the workers. Then, finally, Marie spat out this: "Listen to this! If the workers refuse to obey the Assembly, we shall make them by force—by force, do you understand?"

The delegation left and Pujol reported the interview to the packed crowds in the street. He named six o'clock that evening (June 22) as the time for a final meeting in the Place du Panthéon, and 5000 or more met there and swore "to be faithful to the holy flag of the Republic." They formed a column which marched through the East End of Paris by torchlight, collecting recruits till it reached some ten thousand. Late at night, in the Place du Panthéon, Pujol dismissed them with the words: "To-morrow here at six o'clock."

Next morning Pujol and his followers kept their appointment. He watched for a little while in silence the enormous, fluctuating crowd; then called on them to follow him. He led them to the place where the Bastille had once stood. He stood on the plinth of the column built to celebrate its fall, and reminded the crowd that they were at the tomb of the first martyrs to liberty. At his demand they bared their heads and every man knelt. Then he said:

"Heroes of the Bastille! The heroes of the barricades have come to kneel at the foot of the monument erected to make you

immortal. Like you, they have made a revolution at the price of their blood. But their blood has been barren. The revolution must be begun again." Then he turned his eyes down to the people. "Friends, our cause is that of our fathers. They carried on their banners the words: Liberty or Death. Friends —Liberty or Death!"

Then he led them up the boulevard to the Rue St Denis. Here the column stopped, and chiefs, appointed how we do not know, led detachments which scattered across the city, building barricades. In an hour Paris bristled with well-defended barricades.

The rest of the story is three days' savage battle with the Paris garrison, ending with a proletarian defeat, rounded off by the shooting of prisoners, arrests and deportations. Pujol, who fought bravely with the rank and file, was to be deported to Cayenne, but his sister was able to get Louis Bonaparte to consent to his being imprisoned at Toulon. Soon after he was included in a general amnesty, but had to fly in 1853 to Spain, where he took part in the abortive Spanish Revolution. The Madrid Junta gave him the post of "Historiographer," but when the revolution collapsed he had to fly again, and arrived in London at the end of 1855.

He very nearly starved there, but lived by teaching. And he was also unfortunate in his love affairs for the first time. One of his mistresses ran away with her own brother. He finally "married in the English manner" (say the notes of his life maliciously) a pretty and silly English girl. Restless as ever, he went with this mistress to America. What happened to him I do not know. It is said that he died in the Mexican war. But the last we really know of him is that he left for America in the year 1858.

Then he passes out of our sight, a wine-lover, a woman-lover, and a braggart, but a brave and honest man, a private whom accident made a leader. One out of many forgotten, whom chance has caused to be remembered, he vanishes from our knowledge with a laugh and the snatch of a bawdy song.

THREE SKETCHES OF THE COMMUNE

i. THE RESTORATION OF ORDER

THE troops of the reactionary National Assembly at Versailles slipped into Paris on the 22nd of May, 1871. The Commune was completely taken by surprise. Its defences were hardly organised, and for three days the Versaillese, as they were called, were able to continue their slow and almost unopposed advance. Not till the 26th and 27th did they meet with vigorous opposition, when half Paris was in their hands.

Well before that, on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 23rd and 24th, courts-martial were dotted about Paris, functioning actively. One of these was held at the Châtelet Theatre, Colonel Vabre being in charge. It began its work on the Wednesday. It did not cease until the next Tuesday. To it, and to many others, were brought all those captured by the troops while walking about the streets, or in house-to-house searches. The defenders of the barricades were shot out of hand; also many men and women whom a fancied resemblance to a member of the Commune, a spy's denunciation—the Préfecture of Police kept a record of nearly 400,000 written délations—or chance suspicion condemned.

Those on whom doubt rested were brought to the court-martial. They came with a small escort of soldiers, sometimes with their hands bound.

Quickly they were surrounded by a howling mob—partly of "well-disposed" people who had returned from Versailles, partly of police spies and domestic servants, partly of unfortunates who hoped to evade suspicion by their violence, partly, too, of the loathsome Paris dregs who had forced the executions of Generals Lecomte and Thomas by the Commune, who were then shouting at the other end of Paris for the murder of the hostages held by the Reds, and who all through clamoured for more and more murder and bloodshed for their pleasure. This debased mob was so violent that frequently it was able to break through the escort and beat, scratch, and stamp on the prisoners.

The Châtelet was a big grey stone building of the Empire style,

florid and over-decorated. Its most notable feature in front was the double row of porticoes, one on the ground floor, one up above which had served as a foyer for spectators between the acts. This latter, as the column of prisoners approached, could be seen to be crowded with other prisoners awaiting trial. Outside, Municipal Guards on horseback kept back with difficulty the howling crowd from the broad pavement in front, which was occupied only by a few lounging officers and soldiers.

The prisoners were very quickly brought before the officer commanding, and their trial was soon over. Only a young officer, Colonel Vabre, perpetually smoking a cigar, and a corporal formed the Court. There were only two verdicts—death or transference for trial at Versailles. Acquittal was hardly known. As an example of the procedure, there is the trial of Monsieur and Madame Tinayre. Madame Tinayre had expressed opinions in favour of the Commune, Monsieur Tinayre had been violently opposed to it, and rejoiced at the arrival of the Versaillese. Madame Tinayre had been arrested, and Monsieur Tinayre followed to save her and explain.

Madame Tinayre came before Colonel Vabre. He asked her name, and a few questions about her share in the Commune. The whole examination did not last two minutes. The Colonel then turned to M. Tinayre and asked: "Are you the man who arrested her?" Ignoring his wife's signs, M. Tinayre replied: "This lady is my wife. I have come here to——" Vabre interrupted, "Ah, you are the husband. Excellent! *Classez monsieur, classez madame.* Class the lady and gentleman." M. and Mme. Tinayre were violently taken and thrust into a crowd of waiting prisoners.

There they learnt they had been condemned to death. Vabre, who was "trying" another case, saw them attempt to ask a sergeant to explain, and shouted: "Sergeant! If any of that filth attempts to speak to you, shoot in the bunch."

As soon as sufficient prisoners had been convicted to form a large enough group, they were sent to execution, under a small escort. Most still did not realise they were condemned.

In groups of forty or fifty—rarely less than fifteen, and sometimes as many as one hundred—the "convicted" prisoners, generally including women and children, arrived at the Lobau Barracks.

The Lobau Barracks, which stands to this day, a big ugly building near the Hôtel de Ville, is a tall erection of grey stone.

No windows exist by which one can see in. That, the bare ugliness of its architecture, and the tall iron-plated door, give it the blind, forbidding aspect of a prison or workhouse.

As the batches arrived the crowd shouted with delight. They described them as "fournées"—ovenfuls—the word a baker uses for the batch of loaves he puts at one time into the oven.

Scarcely had the doors clanged to behind the prisoners and their escort when a terrible detonation, the sound of a volley near by, was heard by the waiting crowd. The iron plates on the doors bounded and vibrated with the noise. Then followed a rapid succession of single shots. Then silence.

What was happening inside? There is unfortunately no doubt.

When the doors closed and forty odd prisoners, up till now ignorant of their fate, were pushed into the inner court, running with blood, there was no possibility of lining them up against the wall in small groups, regularly, and executing them. The narrowness of the court and ricochetting of the bullets rendered very dangerous regular group executions.

Instead, as the wretched prisoners began to scatter, the soldiers volleyed into the mass—"*dans le tas.*" Most fell, wounded or dead, but some had scattered, some been protected by others standing in front. Then rapidly, shot by shot, hunted round the court, these were killed. Others who were wounded and attempting to rise were shot again.

It was not an execution, but a chase.

The watchers outside saw, a few seconds later, an intermittent stream of blood drain from the court into the gutter and run down to the Seine. In the Seine there ran steadily a thin brown thread, not mixing with the water. It was blood from the Lobau Barracks, and could be traced back to it.

Then the priest would come out, after each massacre, firmly holding his umbrella, with a quite unmoved countenance, though his shoes were dripping with blood. For there was a priest inside who absolved the victims and gave God's authorisation to the butchery, who spoke of Christ as he pattered to and fro in the blood, raising the skirts of his cassock in case it should be stained.

Days later, after the massacres were over, a friend came timidly to find out the fate of one of the victims. He was able to look for a moment into the inner court. He saw soldiers mopping up the blood, which still lay in enormous pools on the floor. The

soldiers had to pull their trousers up their calves to keep them clean. Brains were spattered on the walls, up as high as the terrace.

For five consecutive days the shooting went on. For five days and nights, as though jerked from a great machine, the batches of prisoners kept arriving, dying—and going again. For their journey was not over with their death. Light open drays were waiting to receive the corpses and carry them away. They were buried in haste, wherever bare earth could be found, but mostly in the Square St Jacques, which was dug up for the purpose.

It was May month in Paris. The luxuriant and almost exotic vegetation of the Paris gardens was in full bloom. In this square the brilliant green of the lawn, the glorious new foliage of the trees, as yet unstained by the year's dust, the beds of gaily coloured, heavily scented flowers were the admiration of the passers-by, who, though the iron gates were locked, and officials paced in front, could yet glance through the railings.

All the beauty of this May was wrecked by the gravediggers. Trenches, hastily thrown up, destroyed the lawns. Broken branches, still with their green leaves on, hung over strange swellings in the ground, from which, hardly covered by the earth, thrust out sometimes a wax-coloured hand, sometimes a leg, still in the uniform of the National Guard. In the flower-beds, thrown up and undulating, could be seen unrecognisable parts of dead bodies, ghastly wounds caked with blackening blood, putrefying faces with dead and staring eyes lifting themselves out of the ground. A sickening smell hung round the whole square and garden.

When night came to silence the noise of the Paris traffic, the tenants of the houses round heard from the square choking groans, struggles, and a ghastly murmuring sound. In the morning the ground seemed to them to have become still more undulating. Arms were thrust into the air. The living had been hastily buried with the dead.

ii. THE COMMUNE SHOOTS A SPY

In Paris, the morning of the 24th of May, 1871. The Commune was falling. The flames were already licking the walls of the great Préfecture of Police. At the Depot there was sitting a committee of some half-dozen men, headed by Ferré, a short,

dark man in eyeglasses, with a long nose, a hard face and an enormous black beard. Ferré, a member of the Commune, knew that the advancing Versaillese—the troops of the reactionary National Assembly—were shooting their prisoners, and he had determined to shoot one or two spies, in accordance with the decree of the Commune. Perhaps he hoped that would stop the Versaillese murders; perhaps only he wished to make the last days of the workers' defeat terrible to the victors.

He signed a paper ordering the execution of four men, one of whom was a man named Veysset. Veysset had made some attempt to buy the Communard general, Dombrowski. Dombrowski—who at that moment was lying dead at the cemetery of the Père Lachaise—handed him over to Ferré and the Commune's police.

Veysset was brought in by some members of special Communard *corps d'élite,* the *Avengers of Flourens,* a general butchered in the early days by the Versaillese. He was a harmless-looking man, standing up straight in a grey suit with an ordinary felt hat. "You are going to murder me," he said to Ferré. Ferré, on edge, asked him rapidly a question or two. Veysset admitted that he attempted to bribe Dombrowski.

That was enough. "*Allons.*" Ferré, forgetting the other three on the list, set off with the prisoner and an escort of *Avengers* to the big bridge across the Seine which passes by the western end of the Ile de la Cité. On this end of the island is the dark statue of Henri IV. on horseback. They turned to this bridge from the south, passing a low barricade where the defenders were lying flat and firing in the direction of the Louvre.

The Versaillese were too near, so they did not take Veysset as far as the famous statue, but stopped three-quarters way along the bridge. They placed him, standing, up against the parapet, with his eyes to the east. As they bound his eyes he spoke again, stretching out his hands: "I forgive you my death."

Ferré commanded the fire. Veysset remained standing for a moment, then crumpled up. The handkerchief round his eyes came undone of itself, a great red stain spreading over it. Two men of the escort lifted the body and threw it into the Seine beneath. His hat, forgotten, remained on the parapet. As the rest were going away, someone saw it and threw it over. It circled for a moment in the eddies, then it was swept away between the piers, in the swim of the river.

iii. A SITTING OF THE COMMISSION APPOINTED BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY TO INQUIRE INTO THE EVENTS OF MARCH 18TH, 1871

Jean Baptiste Millière was in 1871 elected a Republican member of the National Assembly. He was a slight, thin man, of middle height, with a weak face; pale, with almost colourless eyes, glasses, and a small, drooping, fair moustache. He took no part in the Commune, but equally did not attend the Assembly at Versailles, and remained in Paris criticising the Commune and bitterly attacking the Thiers Government. In particular, he exposed some most discreditable incidents in the past life of Favre, Foreign Minister.

. . . . . .

The Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry, appointed by the National Assembly to investigate the history of the Commune, consisted entirely of his colleagues. It began its sessions almost immediately after the fall of the Commune.

On July 3rd, 1871 the members arrived for their usual session. Nearly thirty well-groomed gentlemen filed in. We should notice little odd about them except something strange in the cut of their sombre black clothes and the height of their black hats. Some had white beards, but most had neatly trimmed black ones. Practically all had cultured, clear-cut, and one would have said gentle faces. From the conversation—the "M. le Marquis," "M. le Duc," "M. le Comte," which recurred so frequently—it was clear that fully half of them were titled.

That day there was introduced before them Staff-Captain Garcin. A typical French officer, youngish in appearance, but on the whole of uncertain age, spotlessly clothed in dress uniform, he entered smartly, determined to make a good impression, knowing that he had to recount events very much to his credit.

He began by some vague and not very correct statements about Communard principles. Then, speaking of May 27th, 1871, barely a month ago, he said:

"Millière was arrested about ten in the morning, in a house which I believe was his. He had made some resistance to the sergeant and corporal who arrested him, and had drawn his revolver. He was brought by two very excited men. The crowd was furious, and wanted to tear him to pieces."

Garcin then explained, not without a certain pride, that he was

taking breakfast with the general in command, de Cissey, in the restaurant Foyot, in the Rue de Tournon, near the Luxembourg. De Cissey was still Minister of War, and there was no harm in an aspiring young officer emphasising his relations with him.

Like many old men enfeebled by great debauchery, de Cissey's slow mind delighted in cruelty, and there was much killing at his headquarters during the suppression of the Commune.

Garcin continued: "We heard a great noise, and we went out. I was told, 'It is Millière.' I saw to it that the crowd did not itself execute justice. He did not come into the Luxembourg, but was stopped at the gate. I turned to him and said:

"'You are Millière?'

"'Yes; but you know I am a Deputy.'

"'Possibly; but I think you have lost your position as Deputy. Anyway, there is a Deputy among us, M. de Quinsonas, who will recognise you.'"

The Marquis de Quinsonas, sitting on the Commission, here started slightly. He had recognised Millière that day, just turning his head and saying, "That is certainly Millière." Here, perhaps, was an opportunity to tell again the story of his adventures under the Commune. But his colleagues seemed a little tired of that story, and, anyhow, Garcin had resumed:

"I told Millière that the General's orders were that he was to be shot. He answered: 'Why?' I replied:

"'I only know you by name. I have read articles by you that disgust me. You are the sort of viper that one stamps on. You detest society——'

"He stopped me by saying: 'Ah, yes. This society I do hate.'

"'Well, it will remove you from its midst. You are going to be executed by it.'

"'That is summary justice—cruelty—barbarity.'

"'And all the cruelties you have committed, do you count those as nothing? In any case, from the moment that you said you were Millière, there was nothing else to be done.'

"The General had ordered that he should be shot at the Panthéon, on his knees, to ask pardon of society for the harm he had done it."

Garcin took him, he said, to the Panthéon. It was a dull morning; the rain was falling heavily. The slight man, Millière,

was taken up the great flight of stone steps to between two huge stone pillars, rather like those of the British Museum. The soldiers stood at the foot of the steps.

"He refused to kneel down," continued Garcin. "I told him:

"'Those are my orders. You will be shot on your knees, not otherwise.'

"He played a little melodrama. He opened his coat and showed his breast to the squad charged with the execution. I said to him:

"'You are play-acting. You want people to talk about how you died. Die quietly; that's best.'

"'I am free to do as I like, in the interest of myself and the cause.'

"'All right. Kneel down.'

"Then he said to me: 'I will not; unless two of your men force me down.'

"I had him put down on his knees, and the execution was proceeded with. He cried out: '*Vive l'humanité!*' He was going to call out something else when he died."

The Commission was most favourably impressed by the story and behaviour of Captain Garcin. His evidence had been followed with unusual attention. The Commission even asked him one or two questions.

He replied that he had also seen to the shooting of a doctor, Tony Moilin, and two men, each of whom he believed to be Billioray, of the Commune. The Commission idly asked him one or two further questions—What did he think was the organisation of the International? Had not one of his prisoners mentioned Gambetta? Were there a lot of foreigners in Paris?

The afternoon was wearing on. The members were obviously rather tired, and the President, Count Daru, caused a slight movement of relief when he leant forward and thanked and congratulated Captain Garcin on his evidence.

Captain Garcin, pleased with himself, saluted and left the room, conscious, and rightly conscious, that he was now marked out for swift promotion.

The clerk called the name of the next witness.

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